

**TEAM Fully Fledged proposals - information session – 5 April 2022 – overview Q & A**

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| <b>Date/time</b>               | <b>Tuesday 5 April 2022, 14:00 to 15:30 CET</b>   |
| <b>Profile of participants</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interested academics</li> <li>- ICOS/GEO</li> <li>- ANGC representatives</li> <li>- Broad public interested in VLIR-UOS Calls for proposals</li> </ul> |

**Questions on the timeline**

**Q: Why should the applicant wait until mid may to receive the report (2 weeks before the deadline)??!?!?**

A: The peer review is organised via an external procedure and on the basis of the selected concept notes, meaning the procedures of peer review assessment could only be started after the ratification of selection decisions by the Bureau UOS on 25 March. Quicker than is foreseen is not possible since we can only provide applicants with the peer review assessments when VLIR-UOS receives all peer review assessment (2 per selected project from the external service provider. This will be at the earliest by 6 May, but ultimately 2 weeks before the deadline. This is a tight procedure, also linked to the delays we had with project calls related to COVID 19 and the extension of our current FYP. We will adapt/optimize this procedure towards future calls but there is no alternative for now.

**Q: Can the deadline for submission be postponed?**

A: No, this is not an option. We will aim at reviewing the procedure and timing towards next TEAM calls but it was a specific request of the Bureau UOS to make sure that project would be able to start in September 2022 and taking this into account this was the best possible timing.

**Conceptual questions**

**Q: will the TEAM FF proposals be assessed by the same commission(s) as was the case for the TEAM Concept Notes**

A: yes, the same commission will address the assessment of TEAM Fully Fledged proposals

**Q: What is the focus of the peer review assessment?**

Peer review focuses on methodology/scientific quality and comes in support of the Selection Commission members, who will receive the peer review assessments and can find information on methodological/scientific quality in order to support their assessment. On the other hand, the peer review assessment permits applicants to take into account the comments of external peer review assessments in a final finetuning of the proposal, or in reaction to the comments of the peer reviewers so that Selection commission members are aware of how the applicant stands towards the feedback of the peer reviewer.

**Q: peer review assessment - are the selected reviewers real experts in the domain related to the several proposals? In other words, should the methodology be very technical (with details) or rather generic?**

The peer reviewers are selected based on their expertise in the broader scientific/educational domain of the project. The explanation should be logical, understandable and following the proposal instructions.

**Q: peer review. So if I understand correctly the methodological review has not influenced the selection of the proposals?**

A: the peer review is mainly intended to improve the development of the full proposal + inform the selection commission when assessing the final proposals.

**Q: what is the difference between the peer review assessment and the selection commission assessment?**

A: the peer review assessment supports the judgement of the selection commission, but these commissions have the final responsibility in selecting proposals. Selection commissions are composed by external contracted experts with a mix of HE, scientific and regional expertise, with a mandate for a certain period of time as also explained in the Annex of the Call with information on the VLIR-UOS Selection system for TEAM projects.

**Q: Can we add partners (partner promoters, team members, co-promoters) in the FF proposal?**

A: yes you can add partners/complement info on partners.

**Q: What is the difference between the 'domains of changes' to which the project contribute, and the 'standard outcomes'? are these two list not strongly linked to each other?**

A: yes, these are strongly linked but the outcome level is focusing on what you hope to achieve at the end of the project, whereas the domains of change are targeting more specific result areas, along which activities are organised, how you do things.

**Q: Is there a balance in approving proposals carried out in different countries or is the selection mainly (only) based on the ranking of the proposals? In other words, is there a min/max number of projects that will be granted for each VLIR-UOS partner country?**

A: we have regional selection commissions. At the level of each commission, 50% of proposals will be selected

**Q: In the same line as the previous question, will there be limitations on the number of projects that the same university can win?**

A: no

**Q: Do you work with an evaluation grid? if yes, do you share the grid, or the weighting of the different evaluation criteria?**

A: The evaluation grid and selection system are included as an annex to the call

**Q: Indicators: as compared to earlier information the optional indicators are no longer included? Are there other changes?**

Indeed; we only request to follow-up on the standard indicators, and next to this a project can formulate and follow-up on project specific indicators. These last project-specific indicators are no longer differentiated from optional indicators which were in fact not more than a number of suggested potential project specific indicators.

**IMPORTANT:** for one indicator ("Uptake/influence of project-supported research in policy and/or practice.", we have clarified the formulation of the indicator and the source of information. Please make sure to use the final version of the format Annex 1 (see in the tool the link referred to, or on the Call page)

## **Technical Questions related to formats and guidelines**

### **Maximum number of characters**

Q: On the max number of characters: in the concept note, you were 'soft' in allowing additional space as the max number were not provided in (reasonable) time. Will a box that is the same in the concept note and the full proposal apply the same length - meaning also allowing some overspill. otherwise we also need to rewrite texts that were 'ready'?

A: now the information is provided in time and there will be no confusion between characters and number of pages. However, we want to avoid applicants needing to rewrite/shorten concept note texts (just for the sake of characters) so there will be some flexibility. We do want to avoid that a section with max 5000 characters (1page) becomes 40 000 characters. So, try to align maximally to the instructions, but there will be some flexibility.

**Q: For which question(s) was the length (number of characters) allowed increased between the concept note and the full proposal? Is this only for the 'Methodology' section?**

A: in the Theory of Change section, but this was indicated in the format and submission tool

**Q: Live stream link is nice, but ZOOM is not working in Cuba. I hope you will use another platform in the future.**

A: We are aware of limitations in certain countries but are looking for the most optimal working platform. The sessions will be recorded and can then be viewed by Cuban partners via a youtube link. We will also make available the Q&A.

**Q: Can the EXCEL sheet be unprotected (does not request password to open some cells)?**

A: you can just use the Excel and fill out the Excel (no password needed) and it is protected because then the information would be easily transferable when inputting the information in the tool. Alternatively you can develop your proposal in the online tool

**Q: questions related to the online submission tool, what attachments can be added? When will the online environment become available?**

A: CV of the promoters in case online links are not available, endorsement letter of the partner institution, in case of synergy and complementarity proof of formalized agreements of synergy, a visualization of the ToC has to be added as an annex. In the call you will find info on this, on mandatory and optional annexes.

In terms of availability of the tool, this will be made available in the week of 11 April 2022.

**Do we have to write all proposals in English? or can this be in French if the country is a French speaking country ?**

Only proposals in English can be accepted.

## **Questions related to the applicant status/ multiple HEI set-up**

**What is HE&SI standing for?**

Higher Education and Sciences Institutes

**+20.000 EUR for Team if multiple HEI's: not only for Hogescholen?**

multiple HEIs means multiple Higher Education Institutes so this of courses includes hogescholen (=Universities of Applied Sciences and Arts)

**+20.000 EUR only for universities/university colleges in Flanders or local universities/university colleges?**

The constellation of multiple HEIs at the promoter level is at level of the Flemish constellation and at level of the partner institutions (in partner countries).

**Can ITG be a partner?**

Within the organisational setting, at level of the project partners, ITG and ARES are certainly welcomed since they are even strategic partners of VLIR-UOS (within the thematic JSF). However, they cannot be the contracting party or in short the promoters of a proposal, since the promoters are to be linked to a Flemish HEI and partner HESI.

## **Questions related to the financial guidelines**

**Q: will a more detailed financial guideline .doc, complementary to this PPT, become available later?**

A: not during project application. For now we only provide the financial guidelines available on the call page. We are currently revising our overall financial guidelines (more elaborate, more tips & tricks, etc.) and hope to make them available by September. The current guidelines should contain everything you need for the development of the proposal

**Q: If you want to budget both a postdoc and a PhD student, do you need to add an extra line in the scholarship part of the Excel? Or do you work with an "averaged" cost per month?**

A: you work with the number of months budgeted per year for research scholarships (predoc, Phd and postdoc, if applicable) indeed, there is no distinction made

**Q: As a TEAM newbe, our finance people do have very detailed questions on what is acceptable in the budget make-up for this full-fledged proposal. Could we direct such specific questions to VLIRUOS prior to submitting?**

A: If you have any specific question you can drop them here.. The ICOS of your association is your first point of contact (but of course you can contact VLIR-UOS if needed).

**Q: If one has an intervention where one subcontracts/hires (1) social workers to deliver services and (2) data collectors to collect survey data, these are not personnel costs anymore?**

A: indeed, except if the persons performing the labour are contracted staff of the partner institution. Service contracts are oriented towards persons external to the local HE/SI.

**Q: Can the 'research' scholar timeline be shorter than the 6 months period for the 'short term'?**

A: yes, this could exceptionally be possible. In fact, it is the nature of the activity that will define whether it is a 'research' stay, from a postdoc-staff member of a partner institute, or a short training/visit from a person with a postdoc status.

**Q: the lumpsum amounts of the scholarship guidelines, do they include per diem and accommodation?**

A: the lumpsums include all costs except for the airline tickets as explained in the powerpoint. In case of PhDs the supervision/research allowance can be added. And, exceptionally, if needed extra accommodation costs could be reported because of non-availability of affordable lodging. However, now at budget level you should work with the amounts + airline tickets. Per diems are not foreseen as part of the scholarship allowances.

**Q: When will the new scholarship guidelines be available?**

A: we are currently in dialogue (together with ITM & ARES) with our donor (DGD) about the scholarship guidelines and hope we can finalise this asap

**Q: Are sandwich PhD accepted?**

A: the system is that of sandwich PhDs

**Q: A professor with PhD who comes to Belgium to prepare, e.g., digital lectures, and thus for study, will get much less scholarship than a PhD student, ... this has created quite some problems in the past**

A: this is an example of a case where now the 'research' scholarship could be awarded

**Q: Why exceptional local PhD scholarships?**

A: certainly not exceptional to be understood as not advisable, but rather that we do not see many TEAM projects where local PhD scholarships are funded from the project budget. Local PhD allowances need to be aligned on the local system.

**Q: And is a budget for conference attendance entertained?**

A: this can be budgeted under operational costs.

**Q: We have a Interinstitutional PhD Programme between the local partner HEIs that we want to support... is it possible to fund two PhD students for this local Programme?**

A: theoretically yes

**Q: In our institute, there are 2 VLIR projects (TEAM and SI). The top-up for the local promoters are different, 60 - 600 EUR/month. Is there a cap for the top-up?**

A: yes, check the guidelines, there is a cap of 40% of gross salary, but even if not advisable, it is possible that different amounts are paid depending on the nature of the activity for which top-up awarded.

**Q: We have an idea that the students perform their PhD in the home institute, but they come at regular occasions to Belgium for 3 months. In that way, we can help more local students to a PhD. Is that idea an option?**

A: it is up to the academic promoter and project promoters to discuss this. VLIR-UOS does not impose a limit in this sense, except for the max. 24 of funding within a 48 months period. However, if short stays of 3 months are implemented the cost of travel might become quite high

**Q: are there any restrictions on beneficiaries of research scholarships regarding their employer? In other words: does a PhD student need to be (become) university staff or can it be staff from a partner organisation as well?**

A: yes, this is explained in the guidelines, a person should have or get a contract from the home HE institute. The concept is that persons are trained that are linked to the partner institution and are in fact agents of change within their institution. In case the person is not staff, he/she should get a contract from the home institution.

**Q: is it possible to have joint PhDs (where the doctoral researcher is normally based in the partner institution but they come to Belgium for say 6 months and the diploma is joint)?**

A: yes, PhDs can be registered as Flemish/joint/double but this does not change the financing possibilities when in Belgium/locally.

**Q: I'm involved through a local NGO partner, but based in Brussels. Is a field visit to support for dissemination and uptake activities eligible to be budgeted under operational costs (travel costs)?**

A: yes, if you are part of the project team and the visit is found relevant/important for the project

**Q: Along the same line, are scientific institution (SI) staff considered at the same level as HEIs or do they have to become HEI staff?**

A: the local institute can be an HE or Scientific institute. The same regulations apply

**Q: one of our local partners is an NGO. They will be heavily involved in the project. do we have to consider all related costs as 'subcontracting'/'consulting fees' (operational costs)?**

A: this depends, some costs can be directly paid by the partner/local institute. In case services are paid via/to the NGO then this would be via a service contract. On the other hand, the principle of synergy is also that we hope complementary funds can be available on behalf of the NGO, in particular in case of DGD funded programmes

**Q: can a private company be a TEAM partner?**

A: a private company cannot be contracted by VLIR-UOS, but can be part of the stakeholders and members of the company could be part of the operational project team

**Q: Flemish post-docs can they stay for 2-3 months in the partner country**

A: this is a long period, Flemish post-docs can travel as team members, short stays can be foreseen, but the idea is not that long postdoc stays are part of a TEAM project. Such a stay should be fitting within the objectives of a TEAM project.

**Q: can a local promoter be the beneficiary of a PhD in the project?**

A: this is not excluded, but is it realistic? The promoter needs to provide guidance of the project, and if he/she needs to focus on the PhD there might be a conflict of interest. But, as such VLIR-UOS does not have specific rulings in this respect.

**Q: should the local partner institution establish a local accredited PhD curriculum?**

A: this is not something we request. This will depend on the academic context. Important is that clear procedures are established as to the selection and follow-up of PhD candidates and eventually if the installation of an accredited PhD curriculum is part of the project focus, this is of course an important potential achievement