Institut "Jožef Stefan", Ljubljana, Slovenija

DIRECTOR'S FUND
CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Issued by Director's Council
November, 2019

BASIC INFORMATION
PURPOSE AND MISSION HIGHLIGHTS
HOW TO WRITE A CONVINCING PROJECT PROPOSAL
TEMPLATES
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

BASIC INFORMATION

The Director's Council of the Jožef Stefan Institute announces the 4th Call for Proposals for the Director's Fund projects, which focuses on purchasing and/or developing a new research infrastructure (as part of an internal investment project) with the aim to facilitate and enable the creation of promising new research areas for younger generations of researchers. Either one or two proposals that include a concise and clear presentation of the new infrastructure and its justification will be selected on the basis of a comprehensive evaluation process. Eligible applicants are those younger researchers who have completed their doctorates within the past 7 years and have decided to continue their research careers at the Institute. The deadline for the proposals is February 3, 2020.

Evaluation criteria

Originality and attractiveness of the idea
Quality of the applicant(s) with respect to the field of expertise
Vision and long-term aims
Novelty and prospects for the new research area
Multidisciplinarity (synergy of the scientific fields and the departments of the Institute)
Impact on the advancement of the Institute and science in general
Appropriate use of funds and feasibility

Principal steps in the evaluation process

Review of proposals (Director's Council)
Hearings and consolidation (Director's Council)
Final selection (Director's Council)
Consensus (Institute's Scientific Council)
Final decision (Director)

Timing and deadline

November 28, 2019	Call for Proposals
December, 2019 - January, 2020	Consultations
February 3, 2020	Deadline for Proposals
February-March, 2020	Evaluation Process
March 27, 2020	Announcement of the final decision

Mandatory elements of the proposal

Part A – Front Page (Template) – maximum 1 page
Part B – Presentation of the Applicants – maximum 1 page/applicant
Part C – Description of the Project – maximum 7 pages (preferred 5 pages)
Part D – Financial Outline (Template) – maximum 2 pages

Amount to be allocated

The indicative amount to be allocated on the basis of this Call for Proposals is €330,000 (for the entire duration of the project). The maximum amount per project is €330,000. Either one or two proposals (with the total amount not exceeding €330,000) will be granted. The requested amount for each project is not considered in the evaluation.

Eligible applicants

Eligible applicants are either individuals or groups of researchers (having completed their doctorates within the past 7 years) who have decided to continue their research careers at the Institute.

Duration of the project

The duration of the projects is up to 3 years.

Language of the proposal

To accommodate any international element of the reviewing procedure, the proposal must be written in English.

How to apply

The proposal must be sent by e-mail as a single, compact PDF file to the Director of the JSI (jadran.lenarcic@ijs.si) by February 3, 2020.

Reporting

Upon request, the grant recipients are obliged to report on the progress of their project to the Director's Council.

Questions

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Prof. dr. Jadran Lenarčič,
Director of the Jožef Stefan Institute, jadran.lenarcic@ijs.si

Regulation

The complete regulations for the management of the Director's Fund are published in the Institute's internal document "Pravila o oblikovanju, upravljanju in uporabi direktorjevega sklada", "Pravilnik o računovodstvu Instituta Jožef Stefan", together with all the other relevant rules of the Institute.

---

1   The investment project financed from the Director's Fund is used to set up a new research infrastructure, comprising the purchase, construction and development of the equipment (including software), as well as the purchase and renovation of laboratory space. Justifiable expenses include the purchase of equipment, the services related to the realisation of the investment and the labour costs of researchers and technicians needed for the development and construction of the equipment and software.

PURPOSE AND MISSION HIGHLIGHTS

These are summarized records of selected articles of the internal document "Pravila o oblikovanju, upravljanju in uporabi direktorjevega sklada"

Preamble

The Director's Fund is intended for the purchase and development of a new research infrastructure (regulated as part of an internal investment project) with the aim to facilitate and enable the creation of promising new research areas for younger generations of researchers. The funds are made available to the best projects selected as a result of the Call for Proposals issued by the Director's Council. Eligible applicants are younger researchers that have completed their doctorates within the past 7 years: the point at which they have already demonstrated their research excellence and have come to a decision to continue their research careers at the Institute. The Director's Fund is also intended to stimulate collaborations between younger researchers, research departments, groups and areas of research at the Institute.

⋮

Article 6

The Director's Fund is created to establish a new research infrastructure with the aim to facilitate and enable the creation of promising new research areas for younger generations of researchers at the Institute on the basis of high-quality, ambitious project proposals.

Article 7

The purpose of the Director's Fund is to help younger researchers realise their original, exciting ideas and provide long-term benefits for their own development and for the development of the Institute as well as science and/or technology in general.

Article 8

The annual contribution to the Director's Fund is 0.8 % of the total revenues of the Institute's research departments for the previous year.

⋮

Article 10

The Director's Fund is used to purchase and/or develop a new research infrastructure. The grant is managed and regulated within an internal investment project.

Article 11

The maximum duration of a project is 3 years.

Article 12

The project (of a scientific or technological nature) can be proposed by one or a group of younger researchers based on the internal Call for Proposals issued by the Director's Council.

Article 13

The project can be proposed by younger researchers up to 7 years after the completion of their doctorates.

Article 14

The project may receive reasonable complementary funds from other sources, such as donations, etc.

Article 15

The project proposal must be agreed upon (and co-signed) the heads of all the research departments in which the applicants are employed.

⋮

Article 21

The evaluation criteria comply with international quality standards, focusing on:

Originality and attractiveness of the idea
Quality of the applicant(s) with respect to the field of expertise
Vision and long-term aims
Novelty and prospects for the new research area
Multidisciplinarity (synergy of the scientific fields and the departments of the Institute)
Impact on the advancement of the Institute and science in general
Appropriate use of funding and feasibility

Article 22

The projects are selected by the Director's Council.

Article 23

Either one or two proposals (the funding for which does not exceed the announced maximum funds available) will be awarded.

Article 24

In the event that none of the proposals reach the required quality threshold, the Director's Fund will not be awarded for that year.

Article 25

The final decision on the selection of projects is taken by the Director, with the consensus of the Institute's Scientific Council.

Article 26

The selected project is implemented as an internal investment project (in accordance with other rules of the Institute) in the research departments in which the applicants are employed. The purchased and/or developed equipment becomes the property of these departments in mutually agreed proportions.

Article 27

The Director's Council monitors the progress of the project's implementation. At the mid-point of the estimated duration of the project, the Director's Council has the possibility to cancel the remainder of the project.

Article 28

If requested, the recipients of the project funding are obliged to report on the progress of their project to the Director's Council.

⋮

HOW TO WRITE A CONVINCING PROJECT PROPOSAL

These Instructions were partially adopted from "How to write a convincing ERC StG Proposal" by Katja Wirth Bürgel, 2009

Getting Started

Recommendations:
- Start early
- Attend and contribute to the workshops organised by the Director's Council
- Exchange your ideas with colleagues in other research departments
- Read the evaluation criteria in the Call for Proposals
- Use the Template for the Front Page as published in the Call for Proposals
- Your proposal must be written in English (to enable any international evaluation). Have your English checked, because some evaluators care about the English
- Your proposal must be co-signed by the heads of departments involved
- If you have questions, contact one of the members of the Director's Council

All the applicants are excellent researchers. Imagine you're applying for your dream job. The Director's Council will receive many applications and needs to make the right selection within a very short time frame. Therefore, your proposal must make a difference.

How the Evaluators Read the Proposals

When writing the proposal, it is important to consider the evaluation criteria and how the evaluators read the proposals:
- They first read the title and the abstract
- The abstract already decides if they are interested in reading more
- They often flip through the pages, this means your proposal needs to be well structured and the important parts should be eye catching
- They have many proposals to read and they never have enough time.
- They normally make three piles: best – intermediate – out

Proposal: Part A – Front Page
Maximum length – 1 page

Complete all the sections and collect the data as requested in the Template of the Front Page Form published in the Call for Proposals:
- The Title should be short and clear
- Choose a short and catchy Acronym
The Summary must be concise and clear: what are your ideas, objectives and methods

Proposal: Part B – Presentation of Applicants
Maximum length – 1 page/applicant

For all applicants include:
- Short CVs
- Main achievements and impact
- Track record

The evaluators invest the funds in people who have proven potential and the ability to manage a team and a large budget:
- The evaluators should know that you are excellent and the right person to receive the funds
- Ask yourself what your qualities are
- To what extent you are able to raise and manage funding
- The evaluators should see your excellence at once: sell yourself, but without bluffing

The sub-headings that are best to describe yourself and your achievements are:
- Education
- Professional experience
- International collaboration
- Teaching and supervision activities
- Leaderships in projects
- Scientific discoveries and/or working technologies
- Key publications and/or published reports
- Impact of your work – selected citations and/or applications, economic benefits
- Awards

Proposal: Part C – Description of the Project
Maximum length – 7 pages

The Title, the Acronym and the Summary are included in the Front Page (Part A) and the financial aspects in the Financial Outline (Part D). In the Description of the Project (Part C) the layout is not specified and is left to the applicants. A typical organisation may include:
- State of the art
- Vision and justification (make a case for your project)
- Objectives and methodology
- Implementation and resources (description of the new infrastructure)
- Synergies and collaborations between scientific fields
- Impact on the Institute and in general
- Feasibility
- Management

The proposal must be short, concise and clear – no noise! It must be novel, creative, high-risk, high-gain, and must make a difference:
- Aim beyond the state of the art
- Contain a clear vision of future developments and impact
- Make substantial advances at the frontiers of knowledge and/or technology
- Use new methods and techniques
- Show that a new infrastructure is indispensable

The proposal should therefore:
- Focus on these aspects
- Display these aspects clearly and in a user-friendly manner
- Comply, where possible, with the evaluation criteria
- Show where and why your project is excellent

Do not forget that the purpose of the Director's Fund projects is to establish a new (not yet existing at the Institute) research facility, therefore:
- Describe the new lab in relation to the Institute (and to science in general), in terms of its research tradition, existing infrastructure, collaborations and intellectual support
- Show the added value of the proposed new infrastructure

Also, do not forget:
- The proposal has to be understandable to both experts and generalists (this counts also for abbreviations)
- Graphs and tables are strongly recommended
- Include a list of relevant references (decide which references are important)
- Include a timetable and milestones

Describe why you need the Director's Fund grant and why now is the right moment. High-risk projects are welcome. However, it must be clear that you are aware of the risks and know how to tackle them (you may present a plan B):
- Be ambitious, but not naive
- The feasibility must be clearly shown, with a balance between originality and realism

Sufficient and appropriate attention should be given too:
- Ethical issues
- Gender issues

Proposal: Part D – Financial Outline
Maximum length – 2 pages

Outline the budget you require. A small budget is not an advantage per se; it has to be reasonable. The upper limit is indicated in the Call for Proposals. Note that the salary rules and workload are restricted by the Institute's regulations for an investment project, which is strictly used for the purchase and development of infrastructure. If you are not 100% sure about your budget, ask

- Your Departmental Office
- Commercial Department of the Institute (darko.korbar@ijs.si)
- Finance and Accounting Department of the Institute (regina.gruden@ijs.si)

Complete the requested Template of the Financial Outline as published in the Call for Proposals:
- Make a list of the equipment to be purchased (it can include hardware and software).
- Make a list of workpackages for the development and construction of the infrastructure
- Make a list of other necessary expenses (renovation of laboratory space, etc.)
- Make expenditure estimates. If possible, base your estimates on preliminary enquiries with suppliers.

Make the proposal appealing

Your proposal should be attractive and clear. The essence should be immediately obvious. An applicant who does not take the time to write a clear and engaging proposal delegates the work to the evaluator, because the evaluator then has to struggle through the proposal to find the essence.

In terms of formalities, this means:
- Make appropriate subdivisions of the text
- Ask yourself which sub-headings can best describe the expected achievements
- The hierarchy of the titles should be clear
- Include graphs and tables

It is important to have:
- A clear structure, a logical flow and a good narrative
- The ideas, the goals and the methods immediately visible

The finish of your proposal:
- Proofread your proposal with the evaluation criteria in front of you
- Do not exceed the maximum number of pages
- Remove all repetition
- Make sure all the figures are easily understandable

Final Check

- Are you within the maximum number of pages?
- Is your layout clear, attractive and user friendly?
- Is the layout of the proposal logical?
- Is your proposal clear, no copy paste, and no unnecessary noise?
- Does your proposal answer: what, why, when, why now, and why you?
- Can your proposal be understood by both experts and generalists?
- Are the figures clear?

- Is your English (almost) perfect?
- Did you evaluate your own proposal with the evaluation criteria in front of you?
- Are all the parts A, B, C, D complete?

TEMPLATES

The templates include the Front Page and the Financial Outline. These forms are mandatory. The MS Word files can be downloaded from

https://www.ijs.si/ijsw/V001/Direktorjev sklad

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Please e-mail your questions to one of the members of the Director's Council.
This page is updated with newly arrived questions and respective answers.

1. Can the same applicant participate in several proposals, as an applicant or co-applicant?

It is possible that the same applicant contributes to several proposals. We suggest, however, that this will be more the exception than the rule.

2. What is the ideal number of applicants?

The number of applicants (one or more than one) is not taken into account during the evaluation of the proposal. However, it is important that the applicants are the main pillars of the projects.

3. Should the proposals be more scientific or more application-oriented?

The nature of the projects plays no role. What is important is the novelty and the impact that will be delivered.

4. Can the project also include the costs of research?

No! The project funds may only be used for the purchase or construction of infrastructure (including the working hours of researchers used to develop specific laboratory equipment, specific software, etc.). The costs of the research will be covered for subsequent use of the infrastructure through the research projects of the interested research departments. It is expected that the new infrastructure will contribute to an increase in the competitiveness of the Institute on the national and international R&D market.

5. Can the project expenditure be higher than permitted if the difference is covered by other sources?

Yes! Nevertheless, it is important that the proposed project is not just a complement to another larger project. The proposed project must constitute a coherent whole.

6. Can an applicant be employed somewhere other than the Institute?

Yes! However, the Director's Fund may only be used for a new infrastructure installed at the Institute. It is also expected that the principal applicants will be employed at the Institute during the project's implementation and have a long-term interest to stay connected to the Institute.

7. Is there an upper age limit for the applicants?

The Director's Fund imposes no strict age limits for applicants. However, the funding is meant for the younger generation of researchers who are establishing themselves in their respective areas of research.