SCRiMM

Structural Collaborative Research in Military Medicine

Call for proposals 2025
Information document including submission and evaluation guidelines and budget rules

Important dates:

Information day: 30 April 2025 (10h00 – 12h00)
Deadline Full proposals: 15 June 2025 (14h00)

For more information on the programme, please visit SCRiMM Website.

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1. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

1.1. CONTEXT

In line with Belgian Defence's aim to reinforce the technological and knowledge base at national level, the Royal Higher Institute for Defence wishes to enhance research collaborations with the different universities and associated university hospitals in the field of military medicine. Therefore, a pilot call for projects within two dedicated themes will be launched.

1.2. ROLE OF THE ROYAL HIGHER INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE - RHID

As a "smart hub" and "honest broker" for scientific and technological research, the Royal Higher Institute for Defence (RHID) is responsible for the development and implementation of the Ministry of Defence's policy on scientific and technological research. Within this policy, twelve focus areas have been identified, including Advanced Military Health, in which research is actively supported and stimulated.

As a "smart hub", RHID aims to promote the growth of Belgian scientific and technological research in the field of defence and security, as well as to restore and strengthen the links between administrations, universities and companies at this prospect. It wishes to achieve this, among others, by promoting and facilitating the participation of Belgium and the Belgian Ministry of Defence in international, national and regional research programmes. In addition, the results of research are published annually for a wide audience and colloquia are held regularly.

As an "honest broker", RHID manages and facilitates, through the department Scientific and Technological Research of Defence (STRD), the research programme of the Ministry of Defence. Although in the past this programme was primarily reserved for Defence research institutions, collaboration with other partners, including Belgian research institutes and industry, is increasingly becoming the norm.

The Ministry of Defence wants to further develop its capabilities through collaborative research with external partners by launching annual open calls for proposals within the frame of its research programme. The current call is the first SCRiMM call, based on two (2) well-defined research themes in which applicants can propose Defence-relevant research.

More information on the institute and its activities can be found on the website: https://www.defence-institute.be/en/accueil-english/.

2. STRUCTURAL COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH IN MILITAIRY MEDICINE (SCRiMM)

2.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

The general objectives of the programme are the following:

- *Support and strengthen scientific excellence.*
- *Develop and realise a critical research mass on themes considered to be a priority for Belgian Defence in order to:*
    - *contribute to short- and long-term capacity development, in line with the Integrated Capability Development Plan (ICDP) and the Strategic Vision for Defence.*
    - *contribute to the culture of innovation planned within Defence, both in terms of technology and process improvement.*
    - *foster employment for Defence.*
    - *contribute, in accordance with the Defence, Industry and Research Strategy (DIRS), to the development of a competitive and credible national industrial and technological base in the field of security and defence.*
- *Encourage the participation of highly qualified Belgian universities and university hospitals in Defence related research.*
- *Promote systemic, multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary and integrative approaches.*
- *Strengthen transdisciplinary research in order to enable potential users to make better use of the research achievements.*

This is the **first call** in the frame of the SCRiMM programme.

2.2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR PROJECT PARTNERS

This call is open to **Belgian** public and private non-profit research institutes (both as funded and non-funded partners in the project).

From the **public research sector**, Belgian universities who have an associated University Hospital are eligible partners.

From the **private non-profit research sector,** the associated University Hospitals must have operational and/or research activities in Belgium. They must have legal personality and their registered office in Belgium.

Foreign partners can participate in the call as non-funded partner only. Foreign partners must be registered in a country of the European Union or in a country of the European Free Trade Association or in a country that is a member of NATO.

2.3. INFORMATION DAY

To inform potential applicants about the context, scope and modalities of this call and to offer them network opportunities, an information day will be held on **Wednesday 30th april 2025 (10h00 – 12h00) at the Royal Military Academy.**

Registration prior to the event is required.

More details are announced through the **website of the RHID** as well as through **social media**.

3. CALL INFORMATION

3.1. DOCUMENTATION RELATED TO THIS CALL

3.1.1. SCRiMM WEBSITE

The following documents are available on the **SCRiMM Website** (https://www.defence-institute.be/call-for-projects-structural-collaborative-research-in-military-medicine-scrimm/):

- Information document, including evaluation guidelines and budget rules: general information on the programme and the call, overview proposal content (the present document)
- Expression of Interest one-pager structure
- Evaluation matrix for full proposals: overview of the evaluation ratings for the full proposals
- FAQ
- Full Proposal structure
- Annexe II – general conditions applicable to the 2025 contracts

3.2. INDICATIVE CALENDAR OF THE CALL

	Date	**At / via**
Information session	30 April 2025 (10h00 – 12h00)	RMA, building I, meeting room Symposium
Deadline Full proposals	15 June 2025 (16h00)	Mail
Panel evaluation, incl. interviews with the applicants	7 and 8 July 2025	RHID
Selection proposal formulated by the scientific committee of the RHID	11 September 2025	NA
Final selection of proposals by the board of directors of the RHID and allocation of projects	25 September 2025	NA
Communication of results to applicants	30 September 2025	Mail
Signature contracts	14 November 2025	Mail

3.3. RESEARCH THEMES AND INDICATIVE BUDGET OF THIS CALL

The present call covers the following research themes, with their indicative budget:

	Indicative budget (M€)
Theme 1 – Military physical recruitment and readiness standards	1.0
Theme 2 – Eradication of Staphylococcal Skin Colonisation with Phages	1.0
TOTAL	**2.0**

There is no set maximum budget per project. However, applicants should take into consideration the total available budget for each theme. The objective is to develop a project with the most efficient use of public resources.

The number of projects that will be funded per theme depends on the evaluation of the proposals and the requested budget per proposal. Passing the threshold of scientific quality, the best ranked proposal per theme will be funded. The remaining proposals will be put together in a common ranking list based on their final evaluation results (after the Scientific Experts Committee meetings, see section 5.1.2).

Budget transfers between the themes are possible.

3.3.1. THEME 1: Making Defence Physical Medical Selection Criteria Reliable, Relevant, Efficient, and Effective

Context

The "People Our Priority" is a long-term priority for the Belgian Defence. It underscores the importance of military personnel's health in maintaining operational effectiveness. The most recent STAR plan count on the recruitment of 2500 military personnel and 1050 reservists for FY 2025. This process will be ongoing for the future years. High attrition rates and Non-Battle Injuries among recruits remain key challenges, leading to training delays, reduced operational capacity, and significant financial costs. Despite these concerns, Belgium's current Defence medical recruitment process does not yet fully utilize technological advancements or the latest scientific insights to optimize candidate physical selection. With the recently announced substantial investments in the Defence sector, there is a unique opportunity to enhance the armed forces' overall capacity by revising recruitment criteria based on the latest research and integrating innovative technologies, such as sensor data for performance assessments. This project aims to assess and refine the selection process to ensure recruits are better prepared for the physical demands of military service, subsequently impact dropout rates and mitigating injury risks.

A key objective is to eliminate assessments that lack predictive validity, thereby enhancing the selection process to ensure more qualified and well-suited candidates and increasing recruitment numbers. By proactively addressing these issues, the Defence forces can improve operational readiness, increase personnel availability for deployment, and create a more efficient, resilient, and sustainable military force.

Aim

This project aims to optimize Belgium's Defence recruitment process by integrating advanced technologies, such as sensor data and benchmarking the NATO physical employment standards (PES). By enhancing the reliability and relevance of physical selection criteria, the project aims to smoothen medical selection and impacting injury rates, ensuring that (only the most suitable) recruits are better prepared for the physical demands of military service. This will lead to a more efficient and effective selection process, ensuring that the PES are adapted for Defence medical selection.

Impact

By making recruitment criteria more reliable and relevant, this initiative will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Belgium's armed forces. The additional Defence funding provides an opportunity to invest in innovation and research, refining selection criteria – matching the PES- to enhance military capacity. A more robust recruitment process will not only maximize the return on Defence investments but also contribute to a stronger, more resilient military, ultimately reinforcing national security.

Work packages: *examples – not mandatory nor limitative list.*

Systematic Review of Military Recruitment Standards

Objective: Analyse existing physical employment standards (PES) across NATO members and allied nations to identify evidence-based best practices. Methods: Meta-analysis of injury predictors, attrition factors, and predictive validity studies. Focus on benchmarking against NATO's PES framework.

Analysis of International Practices – Criteria, Attrition, and Injury Rates
This work package involves reviewing recruitment criteria, attrition rates, and injury data from other countries to identify best practices for selecting the most suitable candidates for military service. By comparing international (NATO) approaches, we aim to refine Belgium's Defence recruitment process to improve candidate selection, reduce attrition, and prevent injuries.

Sensor-Based Physical Performance Profiling
Objective: Develop a sensor-driven assessment protocol using wearable technology (e.g., inertial measurement units, force plates) to quantify recruits' biomechanical efficiency during functional tasks related to the function they're being recruited for. Time efficiency in the process is a key element. Deliverable: A validated dataset linking sensor metrics (e.g., gait asymmetry, load distribution) to injury risk and operational readiness.

Evaluating the Validity and Reliability of the Current Physical & Musculoskeletal Recruitment Tests & assessments
Assessing whether Belgium's existing recruitment tests effectively measure the physical and mental attributes necessary for military service (Predictive validity). By evaluating their validity and reliability, we ensure that the selection process accurately identifies candidates best suited for Defence roles (PES) while minimizing/mitigating the risk of early dropout or injury.

Refining Selection Criteria Based on International Insights and Scientific Evidence + Integrating Innovative Technologies
This work package aims to enhance Belgium's recruitment process by updating selection criteria based on international best practices and the latest scientific research. We will refine testing methods to ensure they align with the demands of military service and integrate advanced technologies, to improve the accuracy of candidate assessments and better predict long-term suitability.

Task-Specific Physical Demand Characterization
Objective: Map the physiological and biomechanical demands of critical military tasks (e.g., load carriage, obstacle navigation) through field studies. Output: Evidence-based minimum thresholds for strength, mobility, and endurance aligned with NATO PES.

Injury Risk Stratification Framework
Create a risk-prediction tool integrating baseline health data, movement screen results, and sensor-derived biomarkers. Validation: Prospective study tracking recruits through training to identify high-risk candidates needing targeted interventions.

Pre-Selection Training Protocol Design
Objective: Develop a pre-enlistment conditioning program to address common deficits identified in rejected candidates. Components: Remote coaching, mobility drills, and load-acclimatization exercises to improve readiness before formal recruitment.

Cost-Benefit Analysis of Process Reforms
Objective: Quantify the financial impact of proposed changes (e.g., sensor implementation, expanded pre-training) versus current attrition-related losses. Metrics: ROI calculations based on reduced medical discharges and accelerated deployment/readiness timelines.

Policy Integration and NATO Collaboration
Objective: Draft revised medical selection guidelines for Belgian Defence, ensuring interoperability with NATO standards. Stakeholders: Workshops with NATO's Human Factors & Medicine panel to align criteria with alliance-wide interoperability goals.

3.3.2. THEME 2 – ESCAPES TRIAL: ERADICATION OF STAPHYLOCOCCAL SKIN COLONISATION APPLYING PHAGE EMULSION AND SPRAY - RANDOMIZED CLINICAL TRIALS TO ERADICATE MRSA AND MSSA COLONIZATION ON THE SKIN

Context

Military personnel are exposed to highly challenging environments during missions where resistant bacteria can easily spread, for example, through trauma and/or war wounds or nosocomially in hospitals. Colonisation with resistant germs on the skin after a mission (or tropical trip) is a well-known phenomenon.

Antimicrobial resistance has reached alarming levels worldwide. The World Health Organization has identified *Staphylococci* as one of the most dangerous bacteria, a major cause of invasive infections with an increasing prevalence of MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus*) and a rise in resistance to mupirocin nasal ointment globally.

This research project focuses on the investigation, development, and application of phage therapy within military medicine. The long-term goal is to develop tailored phage therapy and make it operationally deployable so that military personnel with resistant infections can be treated quickly and effectively during missions.

We propose to initially develop randomised clinical trials (RCTs) to evaluate different treatment protocols in stable bacterially colonised populations. Clinical trials with indications for critical war-related infections (wound or sepsis) are currently difficult to organise. There are also many gaps (such as missing PK/PD test methods for IV phage therapy or which cocktail combinations can or cannot be used together) before we can optimise personalised therapy.

These RCTs with ISP, an anti-staphylococcal bacteriophage, with already convincing efficacy over the years, are therefore a logical first step in this trajectory. It seems very pragmatic to conduct this study among healthy volunteers in the medical sector, such as students in medical fields (caregivers, nurses, doctors, etc.) and among MRSA patients with recurrent MRSA carriage due to therapy resistance or recolonisation.

Aim

To investigate the safety profile and potential benefits of ISP, an anti-staphylococcal bacteriophage, in the eradication of MRSA and MSSA in the context of mucocutaneous colonisation.

Method

- Phase 1 study to evaluate safety.
- A randomised and blinded Phase 2 trial with 2 different protocols with ISP (nasal emulsion and skin spray) *versus* standard therapy (with mupirocin and chlorhexidine) *versus* placebo in healthy control individuals with/without MRSA/MSSA skin colonisation. Safety will be monitored through haematological and biochemical serum markers supplemented by subjective clinical parameters. Successful eradication will be monitored through mucocutaneous cultures.
- Other endpoints to be evaluated: compliance rate of the treatment protocol, user-friendliness, acceptance of use with qualitative and quantitative questionnaires. At least four publications are expected from this research for a PhD.

Anticipated Results

The application of ISP in all protocols is safe, as demonstrated by normal haematological and biochemical parameters, as well as comparable subjective complaints and side effects in the different study groups. Decolonization with ISP-implemented protocols does not show significantly lower success compared to standard therapy.

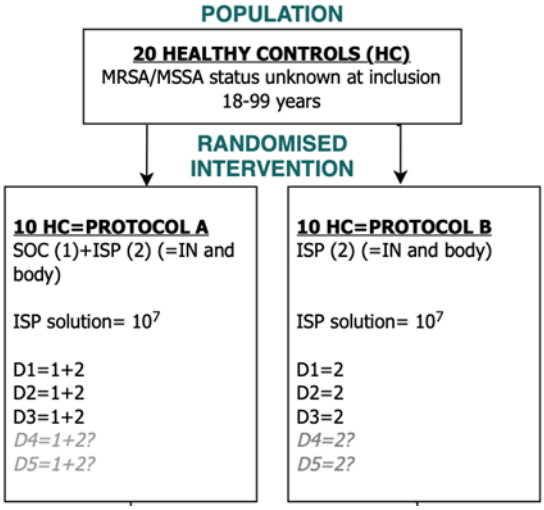
Societal and Medical Benefits

Non-antibiotic, "small spectrum" alternatives for MRSA eradication are important as they can reduce interference with the microbiome, cause less skin irritation from antiseptics, and address the fight against the increase in antimicrobial resistance. A simpler and shorter eradication regimen will result in improved patient compliance and consequently a better success rate.

ANNEX 1: Design Phase 1 and Phase 2 RCTs

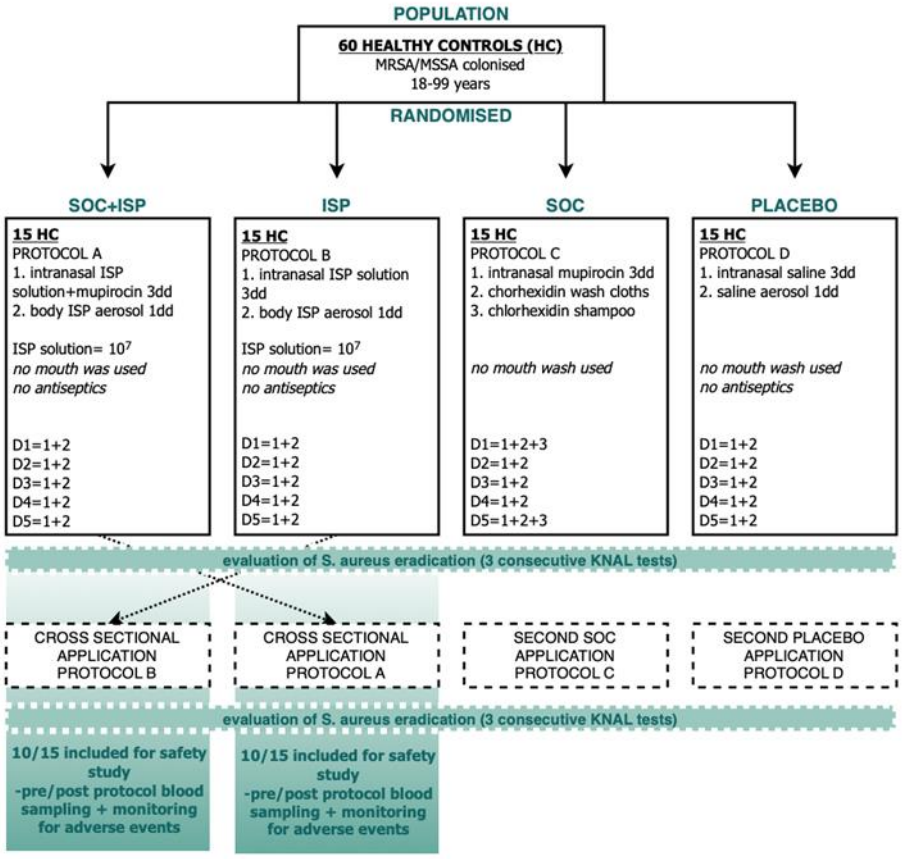
Phase 1 in healthy volunteers (MSSA or MRSA carrier unknown)

HC Healthy controls; IN intranasal; SOC standard of care; ISP phage against Staphylococcus



Phase 2 in MSSA of MRSA carriers

HC Healthy controls MSSA positive or MRSA positive; IN intranasal; SOC-standard of care; ISP-phage against Staphylococcus; KNAL screening sampling of the throat, both nostrils, groin, and perineum



3.4. PROJECT DURATION

The aim of this call is to finance a PhD for the duration of the project.

The projects will have a duration of **4 years**.

3.5. PROJECT PARTNERSHIP

3.5.1. PARTNERSHIP

For both themes, proposals must be submitted by **at least one** (public or private non-profit) **research institute**. The public research institute should act as project coordinator.

Partnership:

- at least one (public or private non-profit) research institute

The Belgian Defence research institute, the Queen Astrid Military Hospital (QAMH) can be a partner in the network[1].

3.5.2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE PROJECT

Project partners jointly share obligations and responsibilities during the implementation of the project. The project should be fairly balanced, even if different partners may have different tasks and subsequently different budgets.

A **coordinator** must be appointed in each network proposal.

For each project, a **Steering Committee** shall be established at the start of the project to act as the governing body (see section 6.3.).

ROLE OF THE COORDINATOR

The coordinator is responsible for the overall project management and coordination. He/she is the contact person for the RHID to communicate with the partnership and must transfer all relevant information to the other project partners. He/she shall:

- Coordinate all activities to be carried out in the framework of the project,
- Coordinate the internal meetings between the network members,
- Coordinate the production of the required project reports intended for Belgian Defence as described in section 6.4.,
- Coordinate the synthesis and translation of the research results, with a view to applications and support for decision-making,
- Coordinate the publication and dissemination of the research results,
- Chair all meetings of the Steering Committee, unless decided otherwise in a meeting of the Steering Committee,
- Convene meetings of the Steering Committee and write the reports of these meetings. The coordinator shall give notice in writing of a meeting with the agenda to each member no later than fourteen (14) calendar days in advance,
- Inform the Steering Committee and the RHID of any problems that might hinder the implementation of the project.

SUBCONTRACTORS

The project may require specific or punctual expertise, which can be delivered in the form of **subcontracting**. It is the responsibility of the project team to ensure that the rules and practices of the subcontractor, and in particular the ownership and valorisation of research results, publications and communications, are compatible with the rules governing the call. The project team takes full responsibility for the final result of the subcontracted work.
Subcontractors must be registered in Belgium. Subcontractors that are companies, a(i)sbl and foundations must submit accurate and current information on their beneficial owners to the UBO (Ultimate Beneficial Owner) register of the FPS Finances and deliver an extract of the UBO register to the SCRiMM secretariat. This document will be submitted to the General Intelligence and Security Service which will examine it in accordance with its missions and legal powers as defined in the law of November 30, 1998, governing intelligence and security services. The advice rendered by the security service may be based on a classified note.

[1] MHQA must inform the RMA of all proposals they are participating in.

In case the subcontractor needs access to classified information, the subcontractor must also obtain a security clearance (see section 7.3).

3.6. RESEARCH ETHICS

The "Code of Ethics for Scientific Research in Belgium" is a joint initiative of the Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, the Académie Royale de Médecine de Belgique, the Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten and the Koninklijke Academie voor Geneeskunde van België, with the support of BELSPO.

All projects must take this code of ethics into account in their research. If applicable, it is the responsibility of the applicants to consult the relevant Ethical Board for their organisation before submitting a proposal.

The code of ethics for scientific research in Belgium is available here: http://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/publ/pub_ostc/Eth_code/ethcode_en.pdf.

It is the responsibility of the applicants to consult the relevant Ethical Board for their organisation before submitting a proposal.

Applicants will be required to complete an "ethics self-assessment" when preparing the Full proposal. The Ethical Advisory Board of the RHID will assess this information and can advise the partnership how to deal with the ethical aspects of its proposal.

3.7. BUDGET RULES

Financing by Defence: This call is subject to the European legislation on State Funding (Art 107 (1) TFEU and the General Block Exemption Regulation in particular. Therefore, financing a public research institute or a private non-profit research centre is set to a maximum of 100% of the eligible costs.

	Public Research Institute and Private non-profit research centre
Partner budget FINANCED BY DEFENCE	100% eligible costs

The total project budget must be detailed in the tables of the budget file (100% cost) of the full proposal. Additional columns are foreseen to indicate the partner contribution to the total project cost (depending on the partner type) and the subsequent RHID funding contribution. (section 2.6 of the full proposal template: Budget assessment).
The project budget is reserved exclusively for the project activities. The different categories of expenditure financed by Defence are:

Staff: Pre-tax wages associated with increases in the cost of living, employers' social security and statutory insurance contributions, as well as any other compensation or allowance due by law and secondary to the salary itself. Defence does not allow cumulative wages for staff. Staff members bound contractually to a public institution - full time or part time - cannot apply for him/herself for Defence staff budget for that part.

The RHID prefers staff to be hired under a labour contract.

Costs related to non-employee staff, i.e. staff working in a management company, as freelancer or interim staff on behalf of the partner are also accepted.

Tax-free doctoral or post-doctoral scholarships are not accepted.

For persons to be hired for the project (so not identified by name in the proposal), the staff costs are limited to a maximum amount of:

- 5 700 €/month FTE for a technician/bachelor (regardless of years of experience)
- 8 000€/month FTE for a Master (regardless of years of experience)
- 8 700 €/month FTE for a Master in engineering (regardless of years of experience)
- 10 500€/month FTE for a PhD (regardless of years of experience)

The funding is limited to the time and period in which the (employee and non-employee) staff participates in the project.

General operating costs: this includes daily/usual supplies and products for the laboratory, workshop and office, documentation, consignments, use of daily software and IT facilities, organisation of internal meetings, etc. The general operating budget may not exceed 15% of the overall project staff budget for the project coordinator and 10% for the other project partners. The amounts claimed must correspond to actual expenditures strictly related to the project, even if supporting documents are not requested. Although no detailed justification is required for these costs, the administration of the concerned partner must keep these invoices in its accounts in the event of an audit.

Specific operating costs: this includes a list of operating costs specific to the execution of the project tasks, such as costs for project analyses, testing, maintenance and repair of equipment purchased by the project, use of specific IT facilities and software, costs for surveys, open data publications, organisation of workshops and events, etc. These costs need to be clearly described in the proposal and each of them shall be justified by invoices during the project.

Overheads: Institutions' general overheads that cover, in one lump sum, administration, telephone, postal, maintenance, heating, lighting, electricity, rent, machine depreciation, and insurance costs. The total amount of this item is set as a fix amount of 10% of the total staff and operating costs.

Equipment: List of investment goods specific to the implementation of the project and to be purchased on the project budget. It concerns the purchase and installation of scientific and technical equipment and instruments, including computer equipment, to be entered in the inventory or assets of the institute/company. Equipment needs to be clearly described in the proposal and shall be justified by invoices.

Subcontracting: Expenses incurred by a third party to carry out project tasks or provide services that require special scientific or technical competences outside the partner's normal area of activity. The amount may not exceed 25% of the total budget allocated to the partner concerned. If the subcontractor is not yet known then only the nature, the planned duration and the estimated amount needs to be indicated in the proposal.

	STAFF COSTS (monthly costs)	GENERAL OPERATION COSTS	SPECIFIC OPERATION COSTS	OVERHEADS	EQUIPMENT	SUBCONTRACTING
PROJECT COORDINATOR	**Technician**: 5 700€/month **Master:** 8 000€/month **Master (engineering):** 8 700€/month **PhD:** 10 500€/month	15% of Staff costs *(Automatically generated)*	-	10% of [Staff costs + Operation costs] *(Automatically generated)*	-	Max. 25% of the total budget of this partner
OTHER PROJECT PARTNERS	**Technician**: 5 700€/month **Master:** 8 000€/month **Master (engineering):** 8 700€/month **PhD:** 10 500€/month	10% of Staff costs *(Automatically generated)*	-	10% of [Staff costs + Operation costs] *(Automatically generated)*	-	Max. 25% of the total budget of this partner

3.8. GENDER

The RHID strongly encourages the applicants to take into account the equality between women and men and to ensure gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the project. The project should include this both in the choice of the researchers and, where relevant, by integrating the gender dimension into their research.

4. SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

The submission of projects will be done by mail to SCRiMM@mil.be.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
The submission of the Expression of Interest will be done by mail to SCRiMM@mil.be.

FULL PROPOSAL
Applicants must submit the full proposal via the SCRiMM mail address.

Changes in the project partnership (changes in participating institute(s)/company(ies), including the coordination role) can only be accepted after the explicit approval of RHID.

In case other companies, a(i)sbl and foundations join the network, they must provide the extract of the Ultimate Beneficial Owner (UBO) register to the call secretariat by e-mail to SCRiMM@mil.be.

The **full proposal** must be submitted at the latest on **15 June 2025 (16h00).**
If the full proposal does not comply with the submission rules or has not been submitted in time, it will not be taken into account for evaluation.

Content of the full proposal:

Within the full proposal form:

- The title, acronym and summary of the project.
- The name and contact details of the project partner(s).
- The proposal description:
    - scope and objectives,
    - the work plan: work packages, the project risk assessment, the budget assessment.
    - coherence between research objectives and methodology,
    - relevance and potential impact for Defence, including the data management plan and ethics self-assessment
    - quality of the partners/partnership of the project,

As a separate document:

- The GANTT chart (mandatory)
- Cash or in-kind commitment letter (not mandatory)

5. EVALUATION PROCEDURE AND CRITERIA

5.1. EVALUATION PROCEDURE

5.1.1. EVALUATION OF FULL PROPOSALS

Only full proposals that are complete and submitted in time will be taken into account.

The evaluation of the full proposals runs in three steps:

Step 1 - Scientific Experts Committee (SEC) evaluation, including interviews with the applicants
Step 2 - Selection proposal formulated by the Scientific Committee of the RHID
Step 3 - Final selection of proposals by the Board of Directors of the RHID

STEP 1 – SCIENTIFIC EXPERTS COMMITTEE EVALUATION, INCLUDING INTERVIEWS WITH THE APPLICANTS

Scientific Experts Committee (SEC) evaluation

For each theme, the Scientific Expert Committee of Defence will be composed of members that are relevant for the theme.

Each SEC will have access to the proposals.

Each SEC will organise interviews with the applicants of the full proposals according to the following schedule:

- Introduction (5 minutes)
- Presentation by the applicants, including an introduction of the proposal (15 minutes).
- Questions and answers (Q&A) (25 minutes).
- Deliberation (10 minutes).

The applicants will assist in the meeting for the presentation and Q&A session of their proposal only.

Each SEC will classify the full proposals into (a) Panel Funding Scenario(s) according to specific criteria:

- Budget alignment.
- Complementarities and/or overlaps between proposals.
- The coherence of the proposals with the strategic objectives (scope) of the themes.
- The cohesion of the partnership.
- General appreciation of the presentation by the applicants.

The SEC Funding Scenario(s) will classify all proposals in:

- Recommended for funding.
- Not recommended for funding.

The SEC will list the proposals that are recommended for funding by order of their final evaluation result.

STEP 2 - SELECTION PROPOSAL FORMULATED BY THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE OF THE RHID

After the Scientific Experts Committee meetings, the best ranked proposal per theme will be proposed for funding to the Scientific Committee of the RHID. The remaining proposals will be put together in a common ranking list based on their final evaluation results.

The Scientific Committee of the RHID is composed of senior scientists and research directors and guarantees the quality level of Defence research. It proposes evaluation methods and research objectives, participates in the drafting of the research programme and evaluates its implementation. The composition of the Scientific Committee is currently defined in the Ministerial Decree of 11 January 2022.

The Scientific Committee will receive the following documents:

- SEC Funding Scenarios(s) per theme, including its motivation
- Common ranking list of all proposals across all themes
- Full proposal of each proposal (on demand)

Based on these documents, the Scientific Committee will perform a strategic selection of the proposals based on the criteria and rules explained hereunder, delivering the Scientific Committee Funding Scenario.

The following aspects will be taken into account when formulating the Scientific Committee Funding Scenario to the governance board of the RHID:

- Alignment of the proposal in relation to Defence priorities.
- Added value of the proposal in relation to Defence priorities.

The Scientific Committee will formulate the Scientific Committee Funding Scenario taking into account the following rules:

- In NO case will proposals deemed ‘out of scope’ be considered.
- In NO case will proposals deemed ‘not recommended for funding’ be considered.

STEP 3 - FINAL SELECTION OF PROPOSALS BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE RHID

The final selection decision of proposals to be funded is made by the Board of Directors of the RHID on the basis of the Scientific Committee Funding Scenario.

5.2. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The evaluation criteria that are used in each step of the evaluation procedure are described in the evaluation matrices (full proposal).

6. CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS FOR SELECTED PROJECTS

6.1. PROJECT STARTING AND END DATE

The projects selected within the context of the current call will **start in March 2026**.

The project contracts will have a duration of 4 years (plus 3 months to allow meeting all administrative requirements before the effective start-up of the project).

6.2. CONTRACTS

For the selected proposals, a contract is concluded between Belgian Defence and the funded partners.

The contract is composed of three parts that make up the research contract:

- Basic contract
- Annex I: Technical specifications
- Annex II: General conditions applicable to the 2025 contracts.

The basic contract designates the contracting parties (partners and Defence) and contains the general obligations applicable to the project, including the project and contract duration and budget. **The basic contract is signed by the heads of the partners involved (directors, rectors).**

The content of Annex I "Technical specifications" is specifically related to the operational implementation of the project. It includes the detailed work description and schedule, details on funding by expenditure category etc. **Annex I "Technical specifications" is signed by the programme manager and the promotors concerned.**

Annex II "General conditions applicable to the contract" contains all general provisions applicable to all SCRiMM contracts. Annex II is the same for all SCRiMM projects of a specific call. It is available on the SCRiMM website and **will not be signed**.

Belgian Defence/RHID grants the selected projects the funds required for their implementation. The RHID shall reimburse at most, and up to the amount specified in the granted budget, the actual costs proven by the partners providing these costs are directly related to the implementation of the project.

In case a "Cash or in-kind commitment letter" is associated to the selected project, this commitment and contribution will be formalised by means of a bilateral contract between the external partner(s) and the project partner(s). The bilateral contract shall be in conformity with all the provisions contained in the SCRiMM project contract. The provisions of the bilateral contract shall always be subordinate to the provisions of the SCRiMM contract. A copy of the bilateral contract must be handed over to the Royal Higher Institute for Defence (RHID, scrimm@mil.be).

The partnership is encouraged to conclude a Consortium Agreement to define internal regulations regarding intellectual property (access to foreground and background, valorisation rights and modalities, and any other theme deemed necessary). A copy of the signed Consortium Agreement must be handed over to the Royal Higher Institute for Defence (RHID, scrimm@mil.be).

6.3. COMPOSITION AND ROLE OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Each project will be accompanied by a **Steering Committee**, to be set up at the start of the project. The Steering Committee is composed of the project managers of the partners, the programme manager, the research manager of Defence and the intended end user of Belgian Defence.

The Steering Committee acts as a governance body, to ensure that the project remains in line with the research objectives and adapt the project plan accordingly whenever necessary. It ensures that the project reporting is done in accordance with section 6.4.

The Steering Committee should meet at least once a year to discuss the project's progress. The organisation of such meeting must be included in the project work plan and the project budget. Ideally, this(these) meeting(s) should take place in the same period as the delivery of the progress report(s).

The following actions and decisions will be taken by the Steering Committee:

- Examine information collected by the coordinator on the progress of the Project, to assess the compliance of the Project with the Proposal and, if necessary, propose modification of the Proposal.
- Determine the policy for press releases, joint publications and other public disclosures regarding the Project.
- Keep a register of Foreground generated within the Project and patents filed thereon, which is concluded at the end of the Project.
- Examine and approve proposed changes to the work programme. In case of actions with a budgetary impact, the Steering Committee will make proposals to the funding authority but cannot decide without the approval of this funding authority.
- If necessary, propose the termination of all or part of the Project.

6.4. REPORTS

The contract foresees the following reports to be submitted to the RHID:

- Initial report: to be submitted within three months after the start of the project.
- Progress report(s): to be submitted according to the specifications in the contract (annex 1, technical specifications).
- Final report: to be submitted three months after the end of the project.
- If deemed useful by the RHID, an additional report may be requested for an external evaluation of the project.
- The RHID can ask for a report or other input at any time during the course of the project in order to provide scientific support to valorisation and service actions related to the programme.

These reports are to be included in the project work plan and the cost of preparing them (including possible translations) must be covered by the project budget.

They should contain all necessary information to assess the progress of the project in relation to the work packages, deliverables and budget. Problems must be identified, including possible solutions.

7. DATA, RESULTS, INTELLECTUAL OWNERSHIP AND SECURITY REQUIREMENTS

7.1. GENERAL CONDITIONS

The Data Management Plan (DMP), to be submitted as part of the proposal, describes how the project partners deal with the collected data before, during and after the project. It is a key element of good data management.

For all aspects regarding the use of data, intellectual ownership and valorisation of the project results and the confidentiality or security requirements, the conditions of the General Conditions (Annex II of the contract and the articles 12, 13 and 14 in particular) apply.

Ownership of existing information and data (the individual background) remains with the original owner.

As a principle, the Foreground - the results (including information) produced by the project - shall be the property of the partner carrying out the work generating this foreground.

The principles for the use of joint foreground will have to be determined by the project partners, with respect for these General Conditions. These principles can be included in a Consortium Agreement to be concluded between the partners.

7.2. SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

For social and humanities data, a copy of the data and/or metadata can be transferred to SODHA (Social Sciences and Digital Humanities Archive) (https://www.sodha.be) after explicit approval of RHID.

7.3. CLASSIFIED INFORMATION/SECURITY RELATED ACTIVITIES

Certain activities undertaken in the frame of the projects may use or generate classified information. This paragraph solely concerns protective measures to be taken to preserve the confidentiality of security-sensitive information regarding these research projects.

A classification is given to documents to prevent their improper use which could damage, among other things, the fulfilment of the tasks of Defence, the external security and international relations of the State and the scientific and economic potential of the country (for the complete list see “Wet van 11 Dec 1998 Art 3/Loi du 11 Déc 1998 Art 3”).

According to the same law this identification should be based on the following classification levels:

- The "**TRES SECRET/ZEER GEHEIM**" level is assigned to a piece if its improper use could cause EXTREMELY SERIOUS damage to the main Belgian interests listed in the law. Topics that qualify under this category cannot be part of the project.
- The "**SECRET/GEHEIM**" level is assigned to a document if its improper use could cause SERIOUSLY damage to the interests listed in the law.

- The "**CONFIDENTIEL/VERTROUWELIJK**" level is assigned to a document if its improper use could harm any of the interests listed in the law.

Documents of which the originator wants to limit the distribution to persons who are authorized to use them on a need-to-know basis, without however attaching legal consequences to this limitation, are marked with the indication "**DIFFUSION RESTREINTE/BEPERKTE VERSPREIDING**".

These classification levels should be applied taking into account both the need to protect information and the need to avoid unnecessary obstruction to the use of research information and results.

Applicants should identify in the Full-Proposal the classification needs for the work packages of the project that involve threat and /or vulnerability assessments and the information on specifications or capabilities of the tool(s) used.

- threat assessments (i.e. estimation of the likelihood of a malicious act against an asset, with particular reference to factors such as intention, capacity and potential impact)
- vulnerability assessments (i.e. description of gaps or weaknesses which can be exploited during malicious acts, and often contain suggestions to eliminate or diminish these weaknesses)
- specifications (i.e. exact guidelines on the design, composition, manufacture, maintenance or operation of threat substances or countermeasure substances, technologies and procedures)
- capability assessments (i.e. description of the ability of an asset, system, network, service or authority to fulfil its intended role — and in particular the capacity of units, installations, systems, technologies, substances and personnel that have security-related functions to carry these out successfully)

Based on the assessment of the provided input a security screening by Belgian Defence might be imposed in the contract on ALL partners of the selected project(s). In that case, these beneficiaries should obtain a security clearance before starting work on classified parts of the project.

The applicable security framework for the action must be in place at the latest before the signature of the contract and will be considered as an annex to the contract.

More information can be found on the website of the National Security Authority (Nationale Veiligheidsoverheid – Autorité Nationale de Sécurité) https://www.nvoans.be/.

This security analysis will not be part of the evaluation process but is essential to be able to start the project.

Persons that are involved in a project must be nationals of a country of the European Union or nationals of a country of the European Free Trade Association or nationals of a country that is a member of NATO.
Persons involved in a project may be subject to a verification. Only after a positive verification, a person can be recruited to the project.

8. COMPLAINTS

RHID places great importance on the quality of their service and on improving the way they operate. A complaint about the administrative handling of this call or the content of the call and the contracts will be handled by RHID.

A special form to handle complaints has been created.

The complaint form is available at the SCRiMM website (**SCRiMM Website)**.

Complaints submitted anonymously or which are offensive or not related to our organisation will not be processed.

A complaint is handled as follows:

- Once your complaint has been filed, a notification of receipt will be sent.
- The complaint will be forwarded to the relevant departments and individuals and will be processed within one month.
- An answer will be sent by e-mail or letter.
- The complaint will be treated with strict confidentiality.

9. CONTACTS

Further information can be obtained by contacting the **secretariat**: SCRiMM@mil.be.