# Belmont Forum Collaborative Research Action:

## *SCIENCE-DRIVEN E-INFRASTRUCTURES INNOVATION (SEI)*
## *FOR THE*
## *ENHANCEMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL, INTERDISCIPLINARY, AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY DATA USE IN ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE RESEARCH*

## Frequently Asked Questions 2018

**Please note that this document will be up-dated regularly. If your question is not answered here, please contact the SEI TPO at SEI-TPO@agencerecherche.fr. For questions about national eligibility issues, please contact the national contact persons listed in the Call for Proposals.**

## 1. What is Belmont Forum?

The Belmont Forum was established in 2009 as an international partnership of 25 national science-funding agencies and science councils across the world that supports global environmental change research. It aims to accelerate delivery and increase impact of the environmental change research and data it produces to remove critical barriers to sustainability by aligning and mobilizing international resources. It pursues the goals set in the Belmont Challenge by adding value to existing national investments and supporting international partnerships in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary scientific endeavours for understanding, mitigating and adapting to global environmental change. The Belmont Forum is uniquely positioned to promote systems, methods, and tools for international sharing of research products and data stewardship through collaboration opportunities across disciplines and coordination between science-funding agencies.

## 2. Which countries/regions participate as a funder in this SEI call?

Funding agencies from the following countries support the program: Brazil, Chinese Taipei, France, Japan, United States of America. Researchers from the above countries are encouraged to submit an application.

## 3. Not all of the Belmont Forum partner countries are in the list of possible participants of the SEI Call. Why?

Funding agencies have been invited to join the preparation and funding of this Coordinated Research Action. In order to participate they need to contribute their share into the budget for the funding of transnational collaborative research projects. While the funding agencies in the countries listed in the Call for Proposals have made that financial commitment, other countries could not. This was mostly due to financial reasons (no funding available) or legal reasons, thus preventing them from participating this time.

### 4. Can a partner from a country/region not participating as funder in this call participate in a consortium?

Yes, a partner from a country/region not participating in this call can join a consortium as a co-operation partner. In this case, the activities of the Co-operation Partner are likely to be financed by own sources, since these cannot be funded by the SEI action (see Call for Proposals).

The applicants in a submitted Proposal will be asked to specify the sources from which the participation of the Co-operation Partners will be funded. A letter of commitment must then be included as an annex to the proposal summarising the commitment of the Co-operation Partner to the project and the source of funding.

### 5. How many national partners should there be in a project? Is it the case that a project with a high number will be given preference?

At least three national research teams, based in three different countries, eligible for the funding from three different SEI funders[1] should take part. The eligibility of national teams is subject to national eligibility rules as appropriate (see Appendix 1 of the Call for Proposals).

The precise configuration should be determined by the research question and project design. There is no optimum number, and applicants should not add partners for the sake of it. All partners should have a significant role in the research and involved in the co-design, co-development and co-implementation of the project. The added value resulting from transnational cooperation must be addressed in the proposal.

### 6. What is a balanced transnational consortium?

A balanced consortium must have a reasonable division of academic and non-academic labour over the partner countries that fit the collaborative research goals of the Call. It is expected that Consortia combine research thinking and technological and technological innovation with science-driven collaboration between partners active across scientific and technological disciplines (e.g. natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, data sciences, computer sciences, infrastructure engineers),

[1] Subject to eligibility rules. For further information cf. Appendix 1I Eligibility criteria per funding agency in the Call for proposals.

and across several positions within the research and development system (i.e. innovation, fundamental and applied research, users). For transdisciplinary projects it is also expected that Consortia clearly involve non-academic partners (societal groups, relevant stakeholders…) in all phases of the project. It is not encouraged that one partner takes the majority of the funding, only allowing a small budget to reimburse travel for the other partners. Consortia are also encouraged to take the equality and diversity dimension into consideration.

### 7. What is the role of stakeholder or community-based partners?

The inclusion of stakeholder or community-based partners is considered to be critical to transdisciplinary research process, and applicants are expected to demonstrate how they engage with stakeholders during the lifespan of the project. Proposals should reflect on how they intend to do so. Such engagement could include co-design, co-development and co-implementation with stakeholder or community-based partners; liaising with non-academic partners about how best to communicate research findings to target audiences; participation of stakeholders in all phases of the project where possible. Reimbursement of stakeholder involvement in a project is subject to national eligibility requirements (see Appendix 1 of the Call for Proposals).

### 8. What is the role of the Leading Principal Investigator (LPI)?

Every project has one LPI. The LPI will be a researcher responsible for carrying out and managing the project. S/he will be the contact point for the SEI CRA on behalf of all the applicants and responsible for the administrative and financial management of the overall project, should it be funded. In addition, the LPI is responsible for leading the project activities at her/his own institution. The LPI must be based at an institution eligible for the funding of a participating SEI agency. LPI status is not limited to researchers at any specific career stage, though national eligibility rules apply.

### 9. What is the Co-applicants' role?

The Co-applicants are responsible for the administrative and financial management for the national part of a project, should this be funded. Each Co-applicant is responsible for leading the project activities at her/his own institution. Each Co-applicant should be based at an institution eligible for the funding of a participating SEI agency. Co-applicant status is not limited to researchers at any specific career stage, though relevant national eligibility rules apply.

### 10. Can our Proposal include more than one Co-applicant per SEI partner country?

Yes, if you see it as appropriate, you may have more than one research team based in the same partner country. For administrative purposes, one of the Applicants in the country needs to be identified as national contact point. If this is not clear, the SEI Theme Program Office (TPO) will consider the first person named as National Contact Point. Communication from the TPO or the SEI partners may be sent to this contact point, who will be responsible for distributing the information to the other partners in the country. Also, please note that your application still has to include research teams based in at least three participating countries subject to eligibility requirements.

### 11. Can we list more than one Co-applicant per University/Research Institution?

Please name only one Co-applicant per University/Research Institution. The Co-applicant will be responsible for managing the SEI funds in his/her institution. Other members of the research team can be identified in the project description under heading 'other project team members' in the Proposal template, but cannot be included as Co-applicants.

### 12. Is the LPI / Co-applicant status limited to researchers at any specific career stage after completing PhD?

Applicants, both LPI and Co-applicants, should have a PhD degree or possess equivalent competence. They can be a senior or a more junior researcher, but s/he should have the capability of leading a research team. National eligibility requirements apply.

### 13. The Call for Proposals state that project teams should strive to include researchers at different stages of their career. Surely, if I include new researchers or people I do not know well, I will weaken my project?

While the principal purpose of the programme is to facilitate excellent research in addressing the proposed topic, an important but subsidiary purpose is to build research capacity for the future. A sensitively assembled project team, which takes account of its members' different experience and expertise and matches these to the project design, should facilitate the achievement of this aim.

### 14. How do I describe the transnational added value of the collaboration?

It is important that all proposals make the added value of their proposed project clear, not only how the data-driven research is academically excellent, but also how it is essential that this is delivered by transnational collaboration and transnational data use and how the management and communication structures enable collaboration across partners from the beginning; i.e. the research is truly integrated from conception and not just bringing together individual projects at the end.

### 15. What happens to a consortium if one of the partners is considered not eligible?

The Theme Program Office will verify the eligibility of the proposals according to the transnational eligibility criteria, while the participating funding agencies will verify the suitability for national funding according to their respective eligibility criteria. Both transnational and funding agencies' eligibility criteria must be met. If one of the research partners in a consortium is not eligible, then the whole consortium is not eligible and the proposal will not be evaluated.

### 16. Can permanent academic staff recover their salary costs in accordance with national guidelines?

This depends on national eligibility requirements; please see the document (see Appendix 1 of the Call for Proposals) in question. If you have further questions, contact the relevant funding agency.

### 17. Can a researcher be involved in more than one project?

One person can be involved in a maximum of two Proposal applications in the current call. A person can be involved as a Leading Principal Investigator in only one of these applications.

### 18. What is the budget of the call?

The budget available is set at a minimum of €YY Million (see also the Call for Proposals).

### 19. What are eligible costs?

All costs must be eligible according to the national eligibility rules available (see Appendix 1 of the Call for Proposals). The estimated budget must be given in Euros only and be tabulated according to the application template provided. For applicants from countries outside the Euro-zone, please transfer your budget to Euro and indicate the exchange rate used.

### 20. Can I contact the members of the panel of experts to discuss my proposal?

No, you should not contact any of the members of the panel of experts to discuss your project proposal at any stage of the selection and ranking processes or afterwards. All questions concerning the assessment process should be directed to the Coordination Office (T2S@nwo.nl; t2s-us@nsf.gov).

### 21. The project description should include no more than 15 pages. Does this include a literature list?

The relevant references for the project description fall outside of the maximum of 15 pages that can be used for the research plan itself. All applications must be in English.

### 22. Should figures and tables be included in the maximum number of pages for the project description?

Figures and tables should be included in the maximum number of 15 pages that can be used for the project description.

### 23. Which relevant publications should be cited in the CVs?

The LPI's and Co-applicant's CV may cite a maximum of ten relevant publications. Each Co- Operation Partner's CV may cite a maximum of five relevant publications. The CV of the LPI should include the information on his/her experience leading national or international collaboration research projects. Each CV should have a maximum of 2 pages. Please mark key publications that are directly relevant to the proposed research with an S (the S stands for significant). Please only include manuscripts which have been accepted for publication or which have already been published as part of the recognised literature. Note that CVs are only allowed for the LPI, the Co-applicants and any Co-operation partners – CVs for other team members do not need to be included in the application.

### 24. If there are ethical issues present, is approval required before submitting a proposal?

No, where specific ethical approvals are required under national arrangements, these do not need to be obtained before submitting a proposal, but must be obtained before work starts on the project.

### 25. What is the data management policy?

A data management plan should be included in the Proposal as part of the Project Description. The plan should include information about the types of data, information, model, software, workflow, code, or other digital products being generated by the project. It should outline the accessible archives or other open repository where these products and accompanying metadata will be housed. Please clearly delineate the strengths, weaknesses and suitability of data sources to address the research questions. If the research involves data collection, please indicate how existing datasets and data sources have been reviewed for this proposed research. If needed, data management plan templates are available from the Belmont Forum website.

### 26. Are Proposals submitted to each individual agency?

The Belmont Forum Grant Operations (BFGO) System is the submission and review portal for the Belmont Forum SEI Call. It can be accessed at https://www.bfgo.org. This is the only way to submit a SEI proposal; applications sent via other channels will not be eligible. Please check the national eligibility requirements whether submission to other agencies is mandatory or not.

### 27. Can I change my application after I have submitted it?

Only completed and applications submitted in Belmont Forum Grant Operations (BFGO) System before the deadline will be considered. Once submitted, the application cannot be changed or added to.

### 28. In what language(s) should the proposal be submitted?

All applications must be in English.

### 29. When can projects start?

Projects are 4-year projects. The earliest starting date for successful projects is January 2019, and projects must have started by March 2019. All national research teams within a given project will be expected to start their projects at the same time. Proposals for projects lasting more than 48 months will be declared ineligible.

### 30. Are letters of commitment a requirement to the proposal?

Yes, including a letter of commitment for Co-operation Partners not eligible for SEI funding is mandatory in the Proposal stage.