



**WP1 MGT - Management**

**D1.3**

# **Setup and implementation of the TA and evaluation procedures**

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30/11/2015



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# 1. Premise

NFFA-Europe offers to European and Third Country<sup>1</sup> scientists from both academia and industry the possibility to carry out comprehensive projects for multidisciplinary research at the nanoscale. Activities are performed in six different types of *Installations*:

- Lithography and nano-patterning (Litho)
- Growth and synthesis (Growth)
- Theory and Simulation (Theory)
- Structural and Morphological nano-characterisation (SM Charact.)
- Electronic and Chemical nano-characterisation (EC Charact.)
- Magnetic, Optical and Electric nano-characterisation (ME Charact.)

Each *Installation* includes laboratories located in different NFFA-EU sites; furthermore, when needed, limited<sup>2</sup> access to co-located Large-Scale Facilities for Fine Analysis is offered as part of the access to Litho, or SM, EC or ME nano-characterisation.

NFFA-Europe proposals necessarily include access to **more than one type of *Installation*** (e.g. Litho and Growth, Growth and Theory, SM Charact. and EC Charact., etc.) and **cannot** be limited to Fine Analysis only. Whenever possible access will be granted in a **single NFFA-Europe site** for all research steps. Access to more than one site for a given proposal will be considered only when technically or scientifically justified.

# 2. Route to the definition of TA and evaluation procedures

The definition of TA and evaluation procedures proceeded in a step by step manner:

Starting from the basic features of NFFA-Europe proposal workflow and requirements, which were already established in the Grant Agreement, a first version of access procedures was defined

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<sup>1</sup> Limitations for Third Country users apply (see eligibility criteria)

<sup>2</sup> NFFA-Europe is not an alternative vehicle to access Large Scale Facilities with respect to the standard LSF access procedures proposed by each facility. Limited access to beamtime (SR, neutrons) may be granted by NFFA-Europe

<sup>2</sup> NFFA-Europe is not an alternative vehicle to access Large Scale Facilities with respect to the standard LSF access procedures proposed by each facility. Limited access to beamtime (SR, neutrons) may be granted by NFFA-Europe only in agreement with the rules stated below.

within mid December 2015 by the project management and the Executive Committee. This version was applied to the first “beta” call opened on December 24, 2015 and closed on March 31, 2016. The first call had a score of 26 projects deposited with no major difficulties by the proponents to carry out the submission and an overall excellent understanding of rules and procedures. Based on the feedback received both from the users who submitted a proposal and from people involved in the evaluation phase (TLNet members, facility staff and Access Review Panel members), the procedures were refined for the second call, that closed on July 15, scoring over 35 proposals (35 new and 3 re-submissions).

All procedures are described in the guidelines for access and proposal submission on the project website and are discussed in this document (see Sections 4-10).

The main steps taken towards the definition of access and evaluation procedures follow:

- 09/10/2015: the General Assembly appoints the three Activity Managers (for TA, JRA and NA, respectively) who by default become Members of the Executive Committee (EXC) together with the Coordinator. The General Assembly assigns to the EXC the task of defining procedures, guidelines, ceilings for travel&subsistence reimbursement to users, definition of Peer Review procedure and invitation of ARP members from a previously agreed list of experts.
- 10/11/2015: Ceilings for Reimbursement of TA User “Travel and Subsistence” costs are established.
- 27/11/2015: Procedures for technical feasibility check of user proposals are defined.
- 21/12/2015: Transnational access procedures are approved by the EXC. The official guidelines for access to NFFA-Europe and proposal submission are published on the website (<http://nffa.eu/apply>).
- 22/02/2016: Periodic deadlines for proposal submission are established.
- 02/05/2016: The structure for NFFA-Europe proposals is updated in order to take into account the feedback received.
- 30/05/2016: A precise timeline for all access related procedures is established.
- 20/06/2016: The EXC establishes that a user declaration form is to be signed by all users before scheduling access to NFFA-Europe installations. This therefore applies to all NFFA-Europe users as the first access has been scheduled in July 2016 and requires explicit acceptance of the access rules.
- 20/06/2016: Rules for reimbursement of multi-site proposals as well as for multiple access to the same site(s) are agreed.
- 24/06/2016: The official guidelines for access to NFFA-Europe and proposal submission are updated.

## 3. Route to the implementation of TA and evaluation procedures

### 3.1 Development of the Single Entry Point

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A Single Entry Point (SEP) was developed by the Beneficiary Promoscience, allowing users to submit proposals for access to the integrated NFFA-Europe facilities. The SEP is described in Deliverable 1.2.

Important dates for implementation:

- 24/12/2015: The Single Entry Point (SEP) portal goes public in its beta version.
- 08/02/2016: The SEP goes online at the official address [www.nffa.eu](http://www.nffa.eu).
- 20/05/2016: The new structure for NFFA-Europe proposals goes online.

### 3.2 Preparation of the online catalogue

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Starting from the list of the techniques given in the annex 1 of the GA a first list of offered facilities has been circulated among the access providers who were asked to update the list, in particular adding the contribution from co-located Large Scale Facilities. The leaders of the different TA WPs have been asked to provide a general description and technical information (PSI for nanofabrication, CSIC for synthesis, CNR for theory, CNRS for characterisation).

Finally, a web based catalogue has been built (<http://nffa.eu/offer>). It contains three hierarchical levels of description of up to 80 techniques (nanolab & LSF) provided by about 200 instruments, distributed on the 6 types of Installations defined in the GA.

An online interlink between the catalogue and the application form has been established in order to configure the Single Entry Point so that the proposal can be readily organized from the wish list defined from the catalogue choices made by the user.

There are a few procedural issues that may be fine-tuned after a consolidated interaction with users. One is the need for a last level of the catalogue description (machine level details). The first call has been run without it and a pilot experience is being considered for some particular techniques. It may help to better define upfront what can be done at the different sites and alleviate part of the feasibility check and process assignment. The other item is the appropriate coverage of the issues of ancillary processes and remote access. In the first case, efforts have been taken to let the users know that any ancillary process needed for device making shall be included in the proposal in the work description of the techniques of 'Lithography and Patterning'. Concerning the second, although users are always welcome, their physical presence may not be mandatory in some instances, because of the way operations are arranged at certain sites. Since this may vary from site to site this issue is being now sorted out by direct interaction between users and technology providers during the scheduling phase.

## 3.3 Start-up phase of the Technical Liaison Network (TLNet)

### 3.3.1 Composition of the TLNet

In the Annex 1 of the GA, eight TLNet nodes have been expected in eight major NFFA-Europe core nodes, i.e. Trieste (CNR), Grenoble (CEA/LETI), Paris(CNRS), Villigen (PSI), Barcelona (CSIC), Heraklion (FORTH), Munich (Juelich) and Lund. Initially, one person per node was involved in the TLNet operation but very soon other people were included, both from minor access sites, like Hamburg, as well as from structured sites, in order to take into account different institutions in the same place, like UAB, CSIC and ICN2 in Barcelona or Soleil and CNRS in Paris. The final composition of the TLNet is reported in the table:

TLNet node	Beneficiary	TLNet node representative	assigned NFFA access providers	local contacts (included in the TLNet mailing-list)
Trieste (IT)	CNR-IOM	Roberto Gotter	central HUB, CNR	Roberto Gotter
			UMIL	Daniela Orani
			TUG	Paolo Piseri
Grenoble (FR)	ESRF	Ennio Capria	ESRF	Heinz Amenitsch
			CEA	Ennio Capria
Barcelona (ES)	PRUAB	Juan Sanguesa	PRUAB	Dorian Martin
			ICN2	Narciso Gambacorti
				CSIC-CNM
			CSIC-ICMAB (Alba)	Miguel Zabala
				UAB
			UAB	Luis Fonseca
				CSIC-ICMAB (Alba)
UAB	Jorge Pérez Barrio			
Villigen (CH)	PSI	Dimitrios Kazazis	PSI	Emma Rossinyol
				Yasin Ekinci
Paris (FR)	CNRS	Dominique Mailly	CNRS	Dominique Mailly
			SOLEIL	Rachid Belkhou
			LLB	
Munich (DE)	Juelich	Flavio Carsughi	Juelich	Flavio Carsughi
			DESY	Thomas Keller

Lund (SE)	LU	Martin Stankovski	LU	Martin Stankovski
				Ivan Maximov
				Anna Ntinidou
Heraklion (EL)	FORTH	Alexios Pagkozidis	FORTH	Alexios Pagkozidis
				Emmanuel Stratakis
				Magda Kokolaki
Theory (distributed)	CNR-IOM (IT), CNR-ISM (IT), UMIL(IT), UPV/EHU(ES), ICN2(ES), EPFL(CH), Juelich(DE)	Stefano Fabris	distributed	

### 3.3.2 Definition of suitable procedures for technical feasibility check

At the beginning of TLNet activity, few remote meetings were convened to foster the collection of the technical descriptions for the online catalogue as well as to discuss and optimize the procedures for the technical feasibility evaluation, the choice of the site(s) to carry out the proposals and their scheduling. After the first call of proposal, used as a beta test for the TLNet, the full timeline to process the proposal from the submission to the final scheduling was defined in detail.

At the NFFA.EU kick-off meeting in Milano the terms of reference for the TLNet engagement have been shared among all the partners. These are:

- The technical feasibility has to be evaluated by the facility staff/responsible
- The technical liaison is carried out in a distributed structure (TLNet nodes)
- Each node manages local operations autonomously
- The technical evaluation system must be objective, reliable, timely and efficient, therefore automatic procedures should be used as much as possible
- Fitting also specific interest of the involved groups (users and staff) is encouraged

The Google Drive platform was chosen as the technical framework for the technical feasibility check. Google drive is at present the most suitable free platform where documents can be edited simultaneously by more partners with no versioning concerns, and where a history keeps trace of all contributions, with the possibility to resume a previous version.

A main excel file represents the feasibility matrix where rows indicate the proposals (identified by ID numbers) and the single steps of their work-plans, and columns are referring to the several possible NFFA-Europe access sites. An initial state of the matrix made by colors and acronyms indicates if a proposal can be done (white cells) or not (gray cells) in a particular site. Violet cells indicate sites which are not eligible because the user comes from the same country. As a first attempt only the cells referring to those sites having all the requested techniques of the specific proposal are put in the white state.

TLNet node					Trieste			Villigen	Barcelona				Heraklion	Paris			Grenoble	Lund	Hamburg	Munich	Distributed
ID	STEP	INSTALLATION	WP	UoA	CNR	TUG	UMIL	PSI	CSIC	UAB	ALBA	ICN2	FORTH	CNRS	SOLEIL	CEA/LLB	CEA/LETI	LUND	DESY	JULICH	THEORY
ID100	1	MBE	WP3	10	x				x				x	x				x		x	
ID100	2	AFM	WP5-SM	2	x			x	x			x	x	x			x	x	x		
ID100	3	Theory	WP4	1																	x
ID100	4	XRD	WP5-SM	2	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	1	1		x		x		
ID100	5	PL	WP5-EC	2				x					x	x							
ID100		total					na			na			ok		ok		na	na	ne	ne	
ID100	1	MBE	WP3	9	x				x				9	x				x		x	
ID100	2	AFM	WP5-SM	1	x			x	x			x	1	1			x	x	x		
ID100	3	Theory	WP4	1	x			x	x	x		x					x	x	x		1
ID100	4	XRD	WP5-SM	2	x			x	x	x	x	x	2	1	1		x		x		
ID100	5	PL	WP5-EC	2				x					2	x							
ID100		total	FORTH	15			na			na			14		pf		na	na	na	na	

Initial state and final state of a proposal in the feasibility matrix, where x indicates the presence of a technique, na=not accessible, ne=not eligible, pf=partially feasible. The blue border indicates a user preferred site.

TLNet members at local sites are asked to change the state of each step of the proposal from white to green, yellow, or red depending if the step is feasible, feasible but with some minor changes, or not feasible, respectively. In case of feasibility also the correct number of Units of Access (UoA) is requested. For each proposal another excel file is created in the Google Drive area, including the full proposal and some comment boxes to each of the work-plan steps, where the NFFA-Europe staff is asked to write a comment in case of partial- or not- feasibility, to be used as a feedback response to the user.

Once the feasibility matrix is completed (it acts also as a check box in order to see the progress) a full overview of the feasibility evaluation is available, as well as the distribution among the sites.

### 3.4 Start-up phase of the Access Review Panel (ARP)

Access to the NFFA-Europe installations is provided to users on the basis of the proposal scientific merit. To this purpose, an independent, external Access Review Panel (ARP) is in charge of the scientific evaluation of the proposals.

#### 3.4.1 Appointment of ARP members

A list of experts in nanoscience covering all necessary competences foreseen by the NFFA-Europe user programme was proposed by the partners of the NFFA-Europe Consortium. Representatives of the Analytical Large Scale Facilities were also included to warrant alignment of the selection criteria for optional limited beamtime.

The list was approved by the General Assembly in the first meeting convened on October 9, 2015 in Munich.

A first short-list of twelve potential members (including a Chairperson), consisting of three experts in each of the four access workpackages, was selected warranting for gender and country balance. The selected experts were invited to join the ARP. Ten of them accepted the invitation. The

remaining positions were filled in subsequent iterations following the same selection criteria described above.

All the steps for the appointment of the ARP members were agreed upon with the Executive Committee of NFFA-Europe.

As of July 2016, the ARP is composed by:

*Lithography:* Lars Montelius, Artur Erbe, José Maria de Teresa  
*Growth:* Alexej Kalabukhov, Jacobo Santamaria, Apostolos Avgeropoulos  
*Theory:* Friedhelm Bechstedt, Stefano Baroni, David Prendergast  
*Characterisation:* Michèle Sauvage (Chairperson), Robert Feidenhans'l, Sabrina Disch

### 3.4.2 Definition of ARP procedures

The ARP is convened by the Chair in video-conference every three months but may also meet upon special request by at least three of its members or by the Transnational Access Activity Manager, or by the Project Coordinator.

The Peer-Review and Science Communication (PSC) Manager of the NFFA-Europe management liaises with the ARP giving support for matters regarding the proposals evaluation in terms of improved practices and technical aspects.

Proposals assessed as technically feasible by the TLNet are transferred by the PSC Manager to the ARP for scientific evaluation.

ARP members who are directly involved in a proposal or conflicted in any other way do not participate in the discussion or scoring of that proposal.

The reviewing process is carried out by at least three ARP members identified by the Chair on the basis of their scientific competences in relation to the proposal contents, with a spokesperson chosen among them.

Final decision on the short list of proposals to be recommended for access is taken collectively by the Panel in a plenary meeting closing the evaluation process.

The batch of proposals is returned to PSC Manager of NFFA-Europe with a clear ranking (possibly with no ties) of priority for access, and an explicit indication of the projects not to be granted any access. The PSC Manager notifies the TLNet of the ARP decision.

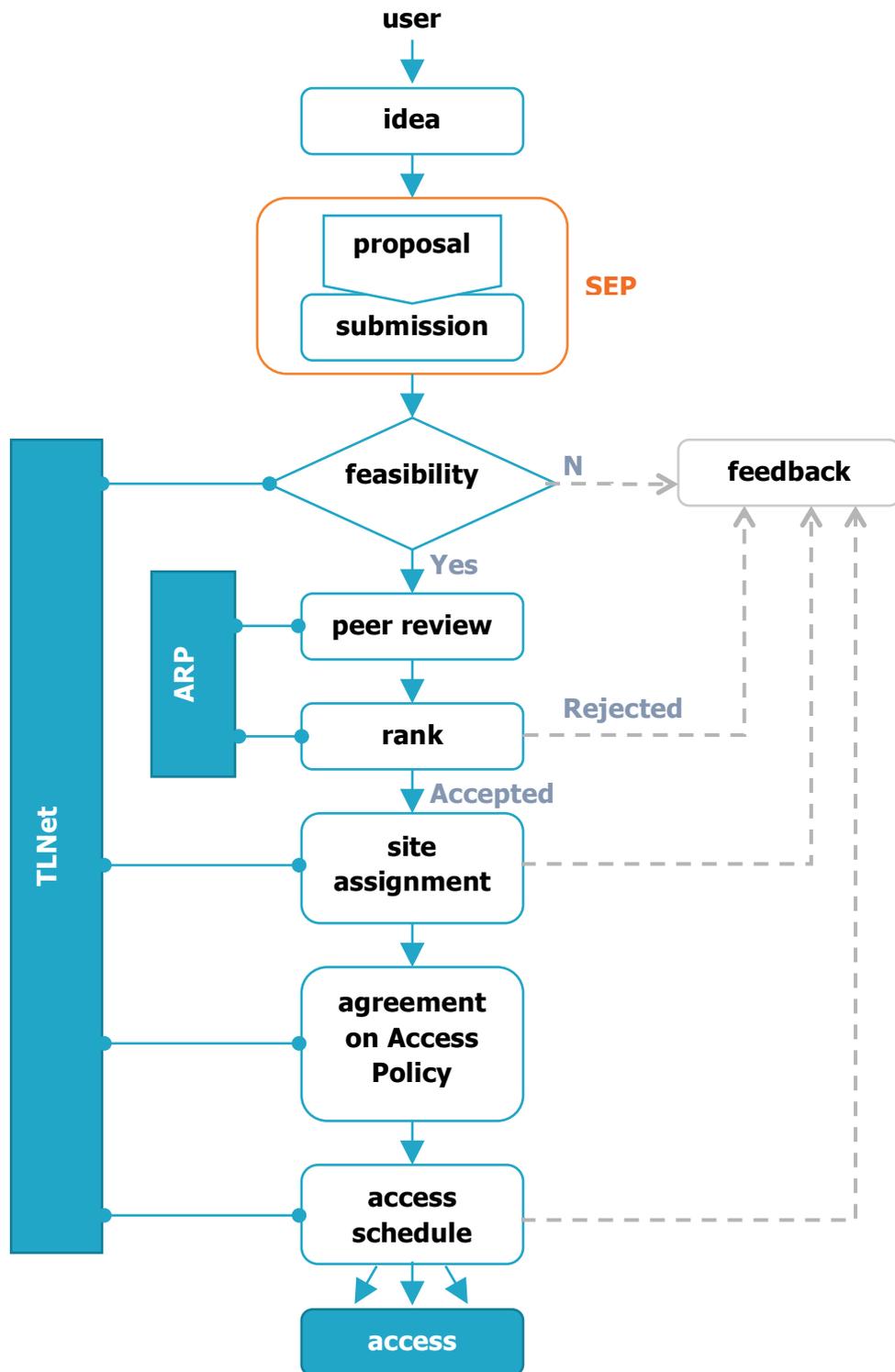
#### *Important dates for implementation:*

- 14/12/2015: 11 out of 12 members of the Access Review Panel (ARP) are appointed and the ARP Chair identified.
- 21/12/2015: A 12<sup>th</sup> member of the ARP is appointed.
- 21/03/2016: One of the ARP members had to resign from the position.
- 11/04/2016: First ARP video-meeting
- 02/05/2016: The ARP reaches its final configuration.
- 18/05/2016: The first round of ARP work was completed with a smooth high-quality evaluation process that yielded 17 projects being considered of high priority for access.

## 4. Proposal workflow

1. The Single Entry Point (SEP) provides the overall list of tools and methods available and is the portal to submit a proposal. Proposals can be submitted at any time but will be periodically collected for scientific evaluation. These periodic collections will take place on 15 January, 15 April, 15 July, 15 October each year.
2. After submission, the technical feasibility of each research step will be assessed by the Technical Liaison Network (TLNet). If proposals are submitted well before the collection deadlines, possible technical problems will be promptly identified and solutions worked out and proposed to the users who may refine the proposal accordingly.
3. Feasible proposals will then be evaluated and ranked according to scientific merit by an external panel of reviewers (ARP).
4. The best-ranked proposals will be assigned to the most appropriate NFFA-Europe site/sites, guaranteeing free access to the most appropriate combination of methods and instruments. The responsibility of the site choice is entirely on the NFFA-Europe side.
5. The user group leader is notified by the TLNet of the results of the technical and scientific evaluation and of the assignment to one or more identified NFFA-Europe access sites.
6. The user group leader will be contacted by the specific access site/s to agree on a scheduling and to be instructed on specific procedures for access.
7. All users are asked to accept and undersign the NFFA-Europe User Access Policy (available at [www.nffa.eu/apply](http://www.nffa.eu/apply)). The Policy contains conditions, instructions and informative notes concerning dissemination of results, IPR issues, confidentiality, liability, safety, open data policy, records. NFFA-Europe will not schedule any research activity before signed forms from all participants are received by the TLNet.

A general timeline of all access related procedures can be found on the project website: [www.nffa.eu/apply](http://www.nffa.eu/apply).



## 5. Eligibility criteria

Access is granted to user groups, i.e. teams of one or more researchers, led by a user group leader, according to the following eligibility criteria:

- *Transnationality*: The user group leader and the majority of the users must work in a country **other** than the country(ies) where the installations are located.
- *EU and Third Country users*: In case of positive proposal evaluation, access for user groups with at least half of the users working in a EU or associated country is granted within the capacity of NFFA-Europe; access for user groups with a majority of users not working in a EU or associated country is limited to 20% of the total access provided by NFFA-Europe.
- *Dissemination of the results*: only user groups that are allowed to disseminate the results generated within NFFA-Europe can apply, unless the users are working for SMEs (see below).
- *Industry*: User working for or with industry of any size are very welcome to apply for NFFA access either alone or in partnership with academic teams. Access is granted free-of-charge provided results are published with the exception detailed below. Industrial users may also opt for a proprietary access where all work and results remain confidential, with no external peer review evaluation. Industry interested in such a fee-based access is invited to contact TLNet directly for a full explanation of the relevant H2020 project rules.
- *SME user groups*: Users working for SMEs are exempted from the obligation to disseminate the results generated within NFFA-Europe. Proposals submitted by users working for SMEs will undergo technical feasibility check and scientific evaluation as for all NFFA-Europe proposals.

## 6. Role of the Technical Liaison Network (TLNet)

The Technical Liaison Network (TLNet) is the backbone of NFFA-Europe, providing a wealth of skills and technical information across the NFFA-Europe multidisciplinary and multi-site research infrastructure. TLNet supports the full lifecycle of user proposals, from first explorative contact by the user to data management. The TLNet will give feedback to requests and questions by users and liaise with contact scientists and specific instruments.

The TLNet tasks are the assessment on the technical feasibility of the proposals and the assignment to the best suited NFFA-Europe sites according to technical requirements and availability and overall optimisation. A mechanism similar to the peer review system of an editorial board is used to rapidly obtain technical responses from the NFFA installations and the best solution for the user is setup.

The first step in approaching NFFA-Europe for specific technical questions can be made by simply sending an e-mail to [tlnet@nffa.eu](mailto:tlnet@nffa.eu). In the future, a one-stop-shop will be implemented for a more efficient interaction with the user.

## 7. Proposal requirements

- NFFA-Europe proposals must include access to at least two different types of Installations (Litho/Growth/Theory/SM Charact./EC Charact./ME Charact.).
- Access limited to Fine Analysis methods is not allowed as it is directly provided by the Large Scale Facilities
- Access to Fine Analysis at Large Scale Facilities by NFFA-Europe proposals (in combination with other installations) is limited to six shifts/proposal, where a shift is the usual quantum of access to the specific Large Scale Facility (eight shifts/proposal in well-justified cases only)
- A preference for access to a specific NFFA-Europe site can be indicated by the users, but this information is not binding for the NFFA-Europe scheduling. Whenever suitable for the performance of the proposal NFFA-Europe will grant access to a single site that includes all the installations needed.
- Research steps are not necessarily consecutive. If the user group needs time to perform further work at your home Institution before continuing your research at NFFA-Europe, please justify your choice and add your timeline in the description of work. If such justification is accepted and the proposal is granted access, the scheduling will take into account such needs, with limitations applying only to the total travel and subsistence cost per proposal.
- For a limited number of tools/methods, part of the work might sometimes be done without the physical presence of the user group, e.g. for the provision of reference materials or samples, or for performing a remote sample analysis or sample deposition, or for access to a high-performance computing facility. If remote access is available for part of your proposal, the TLNet will offer you this option during the scheduling phase.

## 8. Proposal structure and preparation

Proposals are prepared and submitted through the NFFA-Europe Single Entry Point. From the catalogue, potential users compose their wish list, made of all the steps required by their research. On the wish list page, a link allows users to access their online application form after login with personal credentials. Next to each field, the "i" symbol provides specific instructions and tips.

The application form includes:

- General info on the proposal: title, ERC sectors, keywords, abstract, state of the art, objectives (including the motivation for the use of nffa-europe). Up to five figures can be uploaded to complement the description. Acceptable formats are jpg, png, bmp, gif.
- Work plan section: a table has to be completed for each research step in the wish list. The table includes seven fields to facilitate the preparation of successful proposals and the evaluation process:
  - *What is the purpose of this specific research step?* Here users are asked to explain why they want to access the set-up/method, how it relates with previous/following steps and what they expect to learn. This field is particularly important for the scientific evaluation of the proposal.
  - *What is your measurement/process plan is?* Here users are asked to describe how they plan to conduct the experiment (e.g. Sequence of single measurements/processes with that technique). The timeline of the specific step can be outlined: do you plan to start immediately after the previous step or you need to postpone it (why and how long?). This field is particularly important for the scientific evaluation of the proposal.
  - *Laboratory or large scale facility*: if the technique is available both in laboratory and at a Isf, a tick box will appear to allow users choosing which of the two options they need to access. If the technique is available at Isf only, users will be reminded by a warning message.
  - *Technical specifications and ancillary techniques needed*: Here users are asked to briefly describe the main technical specifications of the instrument/method they chose that are needed to successfully accomplish the experiment (e.g. Resolution, source, detection mode, ...), as well as to indicate the need for ancillary techniques, i.e. Side control measurements (e.g. Sem for fib, xas or xpd for xmcd, rheed for mbe), materials or processes for surface preparation or device fabrication. An ancillary technique is never considered as a separate research step. This field is particularly relevant to check the technical feasibility of the proposal.
  - *Sample and/or target material details*: Here users are asked to provide details on the specific samples and/or target materials they plan to use. The physical dimensions have to be specified when appropriate. This field is particularly relevant to check the technical feasibility of the proposal.
  - *Equipment*: a tick box allows users to inform access providers of the intention to bring some of their equipment, if any. In case users plan to bring their instrumentation (e.g. Evaporators, targets, detectors, etc.), they are asked provide a brief description to check compatibility and safety issues.

- *Estimated units of access (UoAs)*: Here users are asked to give an estimate of the units of access needed for that research step. If they are not able to make an educated guess, the TLNet can be contacted for assistance. The estimate is not binding for nffa-europe. The actual number of UoAs allocated to each research step will be determined by the TLNet after the feasibility check. 1 UoA = 8 hours for experiments, 1 UoA = 1 project for theory. For fine analysis at co-located large-scale facilities a maximum of 6 UoAs/proposal can be asked.
- Other related open access grants: If users have already obtained other open access grants (such as beamtime at a Large Scale Facility co-located with NFFA-Europe sites) for complementary work on the same scientific topic, they can activate the corresponding tick-box providing details when prompted. The info will be taken into account for an optimized access scheduling in case of acceptance of the NFFA-Europe proposal.
- Preferred site: If there is a specific NFFA-Europe site where users would prefer to perform their research, they can choose from the list explaining the reasons for their preference. The suggestion is not binding for NFFA-Europe.
- Additional notes: An "additional notes" field can be filled to bring to NFFA-Europe attention additional information on the proposal.
- Composition of the user group: The main proponent, who will be automatically added as user group leader, is asked to complete the composition of the user group.
- Travel & Subsistence Support Request: Users can ask for a contribution for travel expenses only, for subsistence only or for both. No more than two users per proposal are allowed to ask for support.
- Sample and safety issues: A template for technical specifications of samples and safety issues has to be downloaded, completed, signed and uploaded as pdf.
- Terms&conditions: Users are asked to read and accept terms&conditions for proposal submission and legal notices.

## 9. Proposal Evaluation

NFFA-Europe proposals are first checked for technical feasibility. Proposals assessed as "feasible" will be then sent for evaluation of scientific merit by an independent, external Access Review Panel (ARP).

The ARP consists of twelve experts in nanoscience (including a Chairperson) covering all necessary competences foreseen by NFFA-Europe access programme.

The main criteria followed by the ARP in the evaluation process are:

- Scientific merit, evaluated in terms of:
  - scientific relevance for nanoscience

- appropriateness of the experimental/theoretical programme
- expected impact of the results
- Demonstration of the need for the use of the NFFA-Europe infrastructure
- Innovation potential and industrial interest will be considered as added value.

In case of competition between proposals at equal level of scientific ranking by referees, a preference will be given to

- proposals with female proponent(s)
- user groups who have not previously used the specific NFFA-Europe installations and who are working in countries where no equivalent research infrastructure exists.

Rejected proposals will always be accompanied by a written report explaining the reasons for rejection. Where appropriate, the report will also include recommendations and suggestions for improvement and possible resubmission of a new proposal.

## 10. Travel and subsistence support

EU funding, up to the maximum budget available, will be allocated to travel and subsistence support to NFFA-Europe users, according to the following criteria:

- Up to two users per proposal can be supported
- In case of multi-site assignment, each user can be supported for access to a maximum of two different access sites within the same proposal.
- For proposals envisaging periodic access to the same site(s), multiple travels to the same site(s) are allowed for each user; the maximum contribution will not exceed the one of a single travel. Moreover, the total number of access days, and related reimbursement, will remain as in the approved proposal.
- An explicit request for support must be included in the proposal, by activating the related option
- It has to be specified if the request is for travel only, for subsistence only or for both, and for one or two (maximum) users.
- When support is asked for two users, it is possible to submit a request for different contributions (e.g. travel only for one user, travel and subsistence for the other)
- A maximum contribution of 400€ per person and per travel can be granted. Whenever possible, booking of low-cost flights is recommended. The contribution will never exceed the actual travel cost as demonstrated by ticket invoice.
- A maximum contribution of 70€ per person and per day can be granted for subsistence.

- Detailed procedures for travel & subsistence support request are specific of the NFFA-Europe site where access is assigned. Once access is allocated, the user-group leader of a granted proposal will be contacted by the local coordination of access activities for further instructions.