

INNOVATION VOUCHERS**Frequently Asked Questions**

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Q1: How does the Innovation Voucher Programme work?

A: The Innovation Voucher initiative allows small and medium-sized **companies** to apply for a €5,000 voucher. The voucher can be used to purchase academic support from one of the 36 registered knowledge providers, North and South listed on our website www.innovationvouchers.ie . If you are awarded an innovation voucher you can use it to purchase leading edge academic expertise to meet your innovation requirements. The aim is to improve your company's innovation capability and to build links between Ireland's public sector knowledge providers and the small business community.

Q2: Types of vouchers available?

A: There are two types of vouchers available under the programme, the fully funded €5,000 Standard voucher and the Co-funded €5,000 voucher.

Standard Voucher

The application for a standard voucher can be submitted at any time and a response may normally be expected within four weeks. You do not need to identify your knowledge provider in advance and they are valid for **12 months** from the date of issue.

Co-funded Voucher

The co-funded voucher also has a value €5,000, **but the company contributes 50% of the project costs in cash**. Therefore, a company may use a co-funded voucher to cover project costs up to €10,000 on a 50-50 co-funded basis. The company and the knowledge provider jointly agree on the work programme for the project in advance of submitting an application. Companies may wish to use this option when they are no longer eligible for a standard voucher (may have used three or more standard vouchers). The application for a co-funded voucher can be submitted at any time and a response may normally be expected within four weeks.

Q3: Who is eligible to apply?

A: All small and medium-sized limited companies, in all sectors of the Irish economy are eligible to apply for an innovation voucher. The only exclusions on a sectoral basis are enterprises in the agricultural sector. Enterprises in the agricultural sector have their own supports.

Companies with charitable status, commercial semi-state companies, “not for profit” organisations, trade associations, holding companies, company representation bodies such as Chambers of Commerce, Sports Bodies & Associations, Sports Clubs and other non-commercial bodies or associations are not eligible to participate in the innovation voucher initiative.

For the purposes of the Innovation Voucher Initiative, a small and medium-sized Enterprise is defined as a company or (if part of a group) a group of companies where the total number of full-time employees in the company (or the entire group) is less than 250 and has an annual turnover not exceeding €50m and/or an annual Balance Sheet total not exceeding €43m.

Q4: How can I apply?

A: Applications are made via the Enterprise Ireland Online Application system. We **do not** accept voucher applications via any other method (word documents are no longer considered valid submissions). The link to the Online Applications system is available on our website www.innovationvouchers.ie

If you are a first-time applicant, you will have to register on the Enterprise Ireland Online Application System and create your own account.

Q5: When can I apply?

Standard and Co-funded Voucher applications may be submitted at anytime. The evaluation process normally takes 4 weeks to complete.

Q6: Do I have to be a client of Enterprise Ireland to apply?

A: You do not have to be a client of Enterprise Ireland, nor have an Enterprise Ireland Development Advisor to apply for a voucher.

Q7: How many vouchers will be awarded?

A: Enterprise Ireland awards the vouchers following a review of both the eligibility of the applicant and the knowledge question. Typically 80% of applications are successful. The four main reasons for turning down applications are; non eligibility of the applicant, insufficient information, ineligible activity and low level of innovation.

Q8: I am a sole trader, can I apply for an innovation voucher

A: No, the innovation voucher initiative is restricted to small and medium sized companies and they must be registered as such with the Companies registration office in Dublin at time of submission. www.cro.ie

Q9: I am an IDA client company, can I apply for an innovation voucher

A: Yes, provided you conform to the small and medium-sized company definition for the programme:

For the purposes of the Innovation Voucher Initiative, a small and medium-sized Enterprise is defined as a company or (if part of a group) a group of companies where the total number of full-time employees in the company (or the entire group) is less than 250 and has an annual turnover not exceeding €50m and/or an annual Balance Sheet total not exceeding €43m.

Q10: What do we do if we receive a voucher?

A: The Voucher may be exchanged for advice and expertise from any of the Knowledge Providers listed on our website www.innovationvouchers.ie. The Voucher may be used to access advice and expertise provided by the Knowledge Provider in addressing the Knowledge Question outlined in the company's original application to Enterprise Ireland. The Knowledge Question should form the basis of discussions between the company and the Knowledge Provider leading to the development of an agreed work programme. The Knowledge Providers are publicly funded research organisations and will offer services from within their resources.

Q11: Are vouchers subject to VAT?

A: Yes, the €5K vouchers are subject to VAT and the company is responsible for the payment of the VAT. The voucher is exclusive of VAT and cannot be used to cover the VAT. VAT will be paid on the €5,000 but in general can be reclaimed through the normal VAT procedures. Please note that the company is responsible for paying the VAT on the full project costs for the co-funded voucher projects. The company can use the co-funded voucher to pay for 50% of the project costs (up to a maximum of 5k) and the rest in cash.

Q12: Why was the Innovation Voucher scheme developed?

A: The main objective of the Innovation Voucher scheme is to increase interaction between publicly funded research organisations such as the universities and Institutes of technology and small and medium-size businesses in Ireland. The Innovation Voucher scheme has considerable potential to increase the transfer of knowledge between academics and business. It will achieve this by the demand led nature of the scheme which is designed to eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy.

Q13: What is the purpose of the Innovation Voucher website?

A: The website provides all of the information that you need to apply for a voucher, to help you identify a knowledge provider, as well as instructions about how to submit an application using the Enterprise Ireland Online system.

Q14: Who are the Knowledge Providers involved in the Innovation Voucher scheme?

A: The Knowledge Providers involved in the Innovation Voucher Initiative can be found on our website. They are all publicly funded research organisations. Vouchers may only be used by working with one of the registered knowledge providers. They are Universities, Institutes of Technology and state funded research organisations such as Teagasc.

Q15: Can I use my voucher with a private sector company or research provider?

A: The voucher may not be used, either directly or indirectly, to fund services provided to the company by a private sector Company or Research Provider.

Q16: Who is leading the Innovation Voucher Initiative?

A: Enterprise Ireland.

Q17: Can I apply again if I am unsuccessful the first time?

A: Yes. If you have been unsuccessful you will receive feedback outlining the issues with your application. Please take this feedback into account before re-submitting the application.

Q18: How do I know if my business is eligible?

A: We have provided a list of eligibility criteria on our website, the most important is that you must be an SME company registered with the CRO office in Dublin. This may be checked on the CRO website at www.cro.ie

Q19: What information do we require in the Knowledge Question section of the online application form?

A: When Enterprise Ireland receives your application we appraise the knowledge question to determine whether the voucher should be awarded. One of the key objectives of the initiative is to increase the level of innovation in Ireland's Small and medium sized Enterprises, so it is important that the knowledge question demonstrates that the proposed activity requires an innovative solution which will have additional value and on-going benefits for your company. Many solutions may already exist in the marketplace and if this is the case, then Enterprise Ireland is likely to reject the application – examples of applications that have not received support include standard website development, standard software development, standard mobile applications development, software purchases, standard training, development of advertising/promotional material, market research and marketing activities. Please check the full list of eligible and ineligible activities on our website prior to completing the knowledge question, www.innovationvouchers.ie

Q20: How does the process start?

A: The company initiates the process by making contact with one of the Knowledge Providers through the contact points for each knowledge provider listed on our

website. The contact point will assist the company in identifying and locating the required knowledge and expertise within their organisation, if it exists.

The company may have granted permission to Enterprise Ireland in the application form to circulate the Knowledge Question to all of the Knowledge Providers. This is a service we provide to the companies who have not yet identified their preferred knowledge provider and may result in an interested research group making direct contact with the company.

Q21: What should be agreed before the project activity commences?

A: The company and the Knowledge Provider must agree on the work programme to be undertaken and the work programme should be in general agreement with the activity as outlined on the original application form and reprinted in the Voucher documentation. Agree a project plan for your project including scope, timeframe, deliverables and costs with your Knowledge Provider.

Please Note: In awarding the Voucher, Enterprise Ireland is not commenting on the full cost, scope, deliverables for the project or the availability of the skills and expertise required among the participating Knowledge Providers to deliver the project. The skills and expertise required may not be available among the participating knowledge providers to deliver the project. The company should also be aware that the full cost of the project may be considerably greater than €5,000 and this should be considered carefully when discussing the project with the Knowledge Provider.

When agreement has been reached, both company and knowledge provider sign the '*Declaration at project commencement: Company & Knowledge Provider*' which is printed on the back of all vouchers.

Q22: How are the full costs of the project addressed?

A: The value of the Voucher is €5,000 which is used to offset the final costs of the project activity as agreed between the company and the Knowledge Provider. In the event that the final costs are greater than €5,000 the company will pay the balance. It is therefore recommended that the company agrees the full work programme and cost structure with the Knowledge Provider prior to the commencement of the project activity.

Where the full project costs are considerably greater than €5,000 the company may wish to consider alternative funding mechanisms such as Enterprise Ireland's Innovation Partnerships Programme:-

www.enterprise-ireland.com/ResearchInnovate/R+and+D+Collaboration/Innovation+Partnerships.htm

Q23: Should I expect a finished commercial product as a deliverable?

A: No. These are academic research projects and a finished commercial product should not be expected as a deliverable. Examples of the type of deliverable you could expect are reports, drawings, technical specifications, technology roadmaps,

rough product or process prototypes or maybe the results of specific analysis. This particularly applies to projects in the software and engineering sectors.

Q24: How does the company pay for the service(s) provided by the Knowledge Provider?

A: When the work programme has been completed the Knowledge Provider will invoice the company in relation to the agreed work programme. The company signs the declaration at project completion on the back of the voucher.

The Knowledge Provider subsequently returns the Voucher, duly signed by both parties, (2) a copy of the invoice issued to the company and (3) a completed reimbursement claim form to Enterprise Ireland to claim the €5,000 reimbursement of the Voucher.

- Please note that the Innovation Voucher is EXCLUSIVE OF VAT. -

Q25: Can a company have more than one Voucher?

A: A company may make use of a maximum of four Innovation vouchers, one of which must be a co-funded voucher.

A company may have one 'active' voucher at any point in time. Companies should ensure that the voucher has been redeemed by the knowledge provider before applying for a subsequent voucher. A company will not be eligible for further vouchers until their account with the knowledge provider is settled in full (including the payment of VAT).

Q26: How long are the vouchers valid for?

A: All vouchers, Standard and co-funded are valid for 12 months. Each voucher we issue has a voucher number, an issue date and an expiry date printed on the voucher. The vouchers must be returned to Enterprise Ireland before the expiry date.

Q27: Can the voucher time line be extended?

A: Yes; once Enterprise Ireland is satisfied that the project is underway with a registered knowledge provider before the expiry date for the voucher. Under normal circumstances only one extension is permitted and the maximum extension granted is 6 months. There is a formal procedure in place to apply for an extension for a voucher project and this must come from a knowledge provider, not the company. Extension requests are processed by our Institutes Contracts Unit.

The application form to apply for an extension is available to download at the following link on our Corporate Website.

<http://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Process/Higher-Education-Institutes/Innovation-Voucher-IV-Claim-Form.html>

Q28: Can I apply for a voucher re-issue if it is mislaid or lost?

A: Yes; There is a formal procedure in place to apply for a voucher reissue request and *this must come from the company*.

The application form to apply for a voucher re-issue is available to download at the following link on our Corporate Website.

<http://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Process/Higher-Education-Institutes/Innovation-Voucher-IV-Claim-Form.html>

Q29: Can external companies/consultancies be engaged on voucher projects?

A: In exceptional cases Yes; a knowledge provider may request that up to a maximum of 20% of the value of the voucher be used for external consultancy input to a voucher project. Knowledge providers must request approval for any such expenditure in advance by sending an email to the Programme manager.

Q30: What can the knowledge provider claim as eligible costs on voucher projects?

A: All researchers employed by a Knowledge Provider may receive payment for the work undertaken in an Innovation Voucher project provided such payments are within the terms and conditions of the individual's contract with the Knowledge Provider.

Salary costs for work undertaken by students recruited by the Knowledge Providers on short term contracts for the purposes of the Innovation Voucher project.

Small items of equipment and materials may be purchased as required and as agreed with the partner company. This should not be used to purchase equipment and materials that the knowledge provider would normally be expected to have available onsite.

Small amount of travel as required and agreed with the partner company.

Enterprise Ireland normally expect that at least 70% of the claimed costs of any voucher project should go towards paying for the skills and expertise of the knowledge provider.

Ineligible Costs

Sub-contracting of entire project activity to private sector Knowledge Providers.

The VAT charged on Innovation Voucher project activities must be paid separately by the company.

Personal Computers & Devices including phones, tablets, satnavs etc

Overhead charges associated with the project

Project costs incurred prior to the Issue Date of the Voucher.

Note 1: If the project costs incurred by the Knowledge Provider exceed the value of the Voucher such excess shall be borne by the partner company.

Note 2: Vouchers may be redeemed by Knowledge Providers at their issued value or approved eligible expenditure, whichever is the lesser, in respect of work undertaken on Innovation Voucher projects.

Q31: I am awaiting my CRO number, can I still apply for a voucher ?

A: Yes, we will put your application on hold pending receipt of the CRO number. The CRO number must be with Enterprise Ireland prior to the year end in which the submission is made.

Q32: Does the company own any foreground IP generated during the voucher project ?

A: Yes, any foreground IP developed as a result of an Innovation Voucher project will belong to/be assigned to the company unless the company and the knowledge provider have agreed otherwise.