COMMERCIALISATION FUND PROGRAMME
- FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS -

HOW TO PREPARE A COMMERCIALISATION FUND APPLICATION

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How to Prepare a Commercialisation Fund Application

1. **Who can apply for Commercialisation Fund Support?**
   All researchers including staff on contract in 3rd level institutions (e.g. post-doctoral scientists) and non-profit research organisations and agencies in the Republic of Ireland can apply.

2. **Can a company apply to the Commercialisation Fund Programme?**
   No. Companies are not eligible.

3. **What if my contract is due to end before the project is completed?**
   In instances where a researcher’s contract terminates prior to the completion of the project, Enterprise Ireland will continue to support the project subject to the renewal of the researcher’s contract to at least the end of the project or relevant project stage.

4. **Can a researcher on contract be a lead applicant on a proposal?**
   Yes, but the research office must indicate when endorsing the application that the proposal is supported by the head of department/research institute or equivalent. If the proposal is successful, then the institution will need to agree to extend the applicant’s contract for the project period for which they will be funded.

5. **Can Masters or PhD researchers be supported under the Commercialisation fund Programme?**
   Due to the staged structure of projects this support is typically not a suitable fund to support either M.Sc. or Ph.D. students. In exceptional cases, students can be involved in a Commercialisation Fund project, following consultation with the relevant research organisation and review with the Commercialisation Specialist. However M.Sc. or Ph.D. fees are not considered an eligible expense under the Commercialisation Fund.

6. **What is the timetable for submitting applications to the Commercialisation Fund Programme?**
   There are two published calls for Commercialisation Fund annually. The Call close dates are published on the Enterprise Ireland Commercialisation Fund webpage; [www.enterprise-ireland.com/commercialisationfund](http://www.enterprise-ireland.com/commercialisationfund) and on the applicant SmartSimple portal. Additionally, proposals can be invited at any time by the Director of the relevant Technology Directorate (Lifesciences (LS), Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Manufacturing, Energy and Food Commercialisation (MEFC)) for submission to the programme. Invited proposals may include:
   - Resubmissions from a previous call where the proposals have been strengthened based on the panel comments and the Director is satisfied to invite the proposal for submission.
   - Proposals where the commercial case for the innovation has been well developed through interaction with the Technology Transfer Office or equivalent office and Enterprise Ireland and the Director is satisfied to invite the proposal for submission.

Applicants who wish to investigate the potential for their proposal to be invited for submission must actively engage with their Technology Transfer Office or equivalent office in preparing the proposal. An Enterprise Ireland Commercialisation Specialist will advise the TTO and the applicant on what criteria the proposal needs to meet.
before it can be considered by the Director for invitation for full submission. Contact details for the relevant Commercialisation Specialist team can be found via the TTO office or on the Enterprise Ireland Commercialisation Fund webpage; www.enterprise-ireland.com/commercialisationfund.

7. How do I apply to the Commercialisation Fund Programme?
You are advised to contact your Technology Transfer Office and Enterprise Ireland through the contacts listed above as early as possible when you are considering submitting an application to the Commercialisation Fund programme and ideally at least 1 month before you commence preparation of your proposal. In advance of submitting an application to the Commercialisation Fund Programme, you are advised to read the “Commercialisation Fund Programme Reference Document” which details the Programme Objectives, Funding supports, Timetable, Administration, Evaluation and Approval Processes and Conditions of Funding.

The SmartSimple online system is available for submitting CF applications to the CF programme at https://enterpriseireland.smartsimple.ie/

- Register and create an applicant/researcher account on the online system.
- Follow the guidance provided in the ‘Help’ menu and on the online application form to create and submit your application online.

8. Will the Commercialisation Fund support early stage investigations?
The Commercialisation Fund is specifically not intended to fund basic research projects focused on very early stage investigation. However, the Fund will fund development of innovations at all stages in the commercial pipeline if a credible commercial opportunity has been identified and validated.

Ideally projects will provide some evidence of technical feasibility e.g. preliminary prototype, evidence of compatibility with existing industrial processes, scalability potential. It is also expected that applicant/project team will have some understanding of Intellectual Property or patent landscape relevant to the innovation/solution.

As an application requires the applicant/project team to articulate the commercial case for the innovation/solution, an understanding of the market and validation of a need for the innovation/solution in the market through engagement with end-users and customers is expected.

9. What is meant by ‘Technology Area’?
Enterprise Ireland evaluates proposals under three technology/innovation areas:

- Life Sciences
- Information & Communication Technologies
- Manufacturing, Energy and Food

On the online application you must select the Technology/Innovation area you consider most relevant to your proposal. Enterprise Ireland will use this to select the most appropriate evaluation panel for your proposal.

10. Explain what is meant by ‘a project organised in stages’?
Proposals to the programme must structure project workplans in stages comprising 1-3 sequential stages depending on where the innovation/solution is in the commercial pipeline and the amount of commercial and
technical work required to develop an innovation/solution. Each project stage will typically last 6 -18 months and it is expected that the commercialisation of the innovation/solution will run in parallel with its development.

Proposals can include:

- A Proof of Concept of an innovation/solution for a specific market application, submitted as a single-stage project.
- A multi-stage project including where relevant early stage research performed in stage 1 of the project where a timeframe of up to 36 months is required for development of an innovation/solution.
- For an innovation/solution that is close to market a project will typically consist of 1 stage only with the expectation of spinning out a start-up company within 2 years.

11. What level of funding is available for projects?

Enterprise Ireland expects to fund projects ranging in costs typically from €80,000 to €350,000, although Life Sciences project costs are typically higher. All projects with costs outside this range will be considered on a case by case basis.

12. Are collaborative projects encouraged?

The Fund allows for collaboration where the experience and expertise of two or more institutions will bring significant added value to the achievement of a project output that would not otherwise be possible. Institutions and RPOs based in the Republic of Ireland can be formal collaborators(seek budget) on projects. Institutions outside the Republic of Ireland cannot be formal collaborators on projects but may be informal collaborators not requesting budget from the project. However, collaboration is not of itself an objective of the Fund.

13. What are ‘Letters of Support’?

Letters of support which clearly indicate the value of the proposed innovation/solution to an end-user/industry can be included in the application. These can be uploaded to the online application using the ‘letters of support’ upload button on the ‘other information’ tab of the online application form.

Letters of support should preferably be provided by commercial parties/individuals who have relevant commercial/technical insights and were/are acknowledged participants in the target marketplace value chain for the proposed innovation/solution. Ideally, the letters of support would reflect some or all of the following:

- meaningful discussions /meetings between the letter writer and the lead applicant that establish awareness and acceptance of the validity of the commercial/technical assumptions outlined in the project proposal.
- the commercial parties willingness to engage in (itemised) support activities that will meaningfully progress the commercialisation of the innovation/solution; where this is the case then the commitments made in the letter of support should be reflected in the relevant work package of the project plan.
- the potential for the letter writer to be a potential trial partner for further validation of the innovation/solution; where this is the case then the commitments made in the letter of support should be reflected in the relevant work package of the project plan.
14. Can Enterprise Ireland provide access to market Information?
Enterprise Ireland can provide applicants with access to market research resources to investigate the market potential for their CF projects. The applicant must request access to these resources through the TTO or equivalent office or the Commercialisation Specialist assigned to the institution or sector.

15. Who needs to sign the application?
In the online application system, the lead applicant, TTO Case Manager advisor and the Research Office sign off the application online as part of the online submission process. Where a CF application involves a formal collaborating institution, the online submission process requires the formal collaborator to download a signature page to be signed by:

- The formal collaborator and if relevant other researchers in the institution contributing to the project
- The authorised officer in the formal collaborating institutions: This is the VP of Research or equivalent in the institution.
- The authorised technology transfer officer in the formal collaborating institution: This is the Director of Technology Transfer, the Industrial liaison Officer or equivalent in the institution.

Once the signatures are obtained the formal collaborator must PDF the signature page and upload it to the online application form.

16. How are projects evaluated?
The evaluation process is designed to be fair, transparent and rigorous and to select projects for funding that best meet the objectives of the Fund. Proposals will be treated in confidence and external evaluators reviewing proposals will have confidentiality agreements in place with Enterprise Ireland.
Proposals will be evaluated by a minimum of two evaluators including at least one external evaluator. The evaluation assesses a number of criteria which are weighted equally including:

- Innovation and Technology Development
  - Level of Innovation
  - Technical Feasibility
- Commercial Opportunity
  - Size of the opportunity
  - Validation of the market
- Exploitation and Economic Impact
  - Opportunity for Ireland
  - Route to exploitation
- Project team, Workplan and Management
  - Skills, resources and capability to deliver the project
- Project plan and deliverables
  - Project Costs / Value for money

The lead applicant may be contacted during the evaluation and approval process if clarification on their application is required. Proposals and evaluations are considered by review panels comprising for published calls relevant external experts chaired by the head of the relevant Enterprise Ireland Technology Directorate. The panel decide the consensus funding recommendation for proposals. The panel will submit funding recommendations, along with
any funding conditions and/or budget changes, to the Industrial Research and Commercialisation Committee (IRCC) for decision.

17. When will I know the outcome of my application?

For applications submitted to published calls, it is expected that projects will be presented for decision to IRCC approximately 3 months after the closing date for applications. For invited applications, these will be presented on a case by case basis after evaluations are completed to the next relevant IRCC meeting. The Enterprise Ireland Commercialisation Specialist will be able to advise the applicant on the timeline to a funding decision for an Invited proposal.

18. Will I get feedback on my application?

Yes, feedback will be provided to applicants of both successful and unsuccessful projects. This feedback includes the compiled evaluations and the panel comments and recommendations. Applicants will receive feedback after their project has been presented to the Industrial Research and Commercialisation Committee and they have made a decision on the project. The TTO case Manager or equivalent is also provided with a copy of the feedback.

19. For successful Commercialisation Fund Support projects how will project performance be reviewed?

For approved projects, when the contract/grant agreement is being prepared, Enterprise Ireland will agree with the lead applicant and host institution, the deliverables for each project stage and the timeframe for these. For multi-stage projects, key (go/no go) technical and/or commercial deliverables that are quantifiable and can be achieved by the end of the project stage will be agreed between Enterprise Ireland and the applicant and host institution.

The lead applicant and formal collaborators (if relevant) will be asked to submit a report to Enterprise Ireland at the end of the project stage. The Enterprise Ireland Commercialisation Specialist from the relevant technology directorate will review the performance of the project stage based on the report and meeting with the project team to discuss progress in the context of the agreed key (go/no go) technical and/or commercial deliverables. They will decide if the project stage delivered the agreed outputs and on that basis whether funding for the next stage should be released.

20. Can I publish my research?

The primary purpose of the Commercialisation Fund is to produce innovations/solutions with the potential for exploitation in Ireland. Therefore, the protection of intellectual property and the exploitation of results must never be prejudiced by publication or disclosure. Applicants must discuss with their TTO any intention to publish the work and the TTO will have the final decision on whether publication is possible or needs to be deferred in the interests of protecting the IP or enabling exploitation of the project outputs.