



Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020
Co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union



European Union
European Structural and Investment Funds



COMMERCIALISATION FUND PROGRAMME

Reference Document

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The aim of the Commercialisation Fund programme is to improve the competitiveness of the Irish economy through the creation of technology based start-up companies and the transfer of innovations developed in 3rd level institutions to Irish industry.

The programme will fund the development of innovations **at all stages** of the commercial pipeline to the point where the innovations **can be commercialised** as new products, services and companies.

The Commercialisation Fund is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under Irelands European Union Structural and Investment Funds Programme 2014-2020.

The Commercialisation Fund Programme comprises the following funding supports:

COMMERCIAL CASE FEASIBILITY SUPPORT

Enterprise Ireland recognises the need for business development expertise to complement researchers' technical expertise, to develop strong commercialisation strategies for innovations. To this end, funding is provided to researchers in partnership with their Technology Transfer (TTO) or equivalent office to scope and develop the commercial case for their innovation in line with information required to complete the 'Technical and Commercial Information' section of the CF Project Support application. **Researchers who have not had funding previously from the Enterprise Ireland Commercialisation Fund Programme are particularly encouraged to consider this support.**

Support is provided to assist the project team to:

- Perform primary and secondary market analysis to identify the commercial opportunity/ies for the innovation
- Engage with customers, end-users, Industries and other relevant stakeholders particularly focussing on developing the exploitation route in Ireland
- Profile emerging and existing competitor landscape for the innovation
- Perform patent landscaping and plan IP strategy
- Investigate potential routes to exploitation for the innovation to the economic benefit of Ireland
- Understand the regulatory issues or other barriers/hurdles to commercialisation
- Create a small demonstration or early prototype

Awards will typically be in the range of €10,000-€15,000. An open call system operates and an application can be submitted on-line at any-time at www.enterpriseireland.com/commercialcase

Commercial Case feasibility proposals are evaluated in Enterprise Ireland. The criteria for evaluation include:

- o Relevance of the tasks of the feasibility project to the development of the commercial case
- o Strength of planned industry engagement.
- o Track record of the applicant.
- o Level of interaction between the applicant and the TTO or equivalent office.

The funding decision is made by the head of the relevant Directorate (Lifesciences and Food Commercialisation, Information and Communication Technologies Commercialisation, Manufacturing, Engineering and Energy Commercialisation) in Enterprise Ireland. For approved projects, a letter of offer is issued to the applicant and the technology transfer office case manager. For projects not approved for funding, the funding decision and evaluation feedback are communicated through the on-line system to the applicant and the technology transfer office case manager.

COMMERCIALISATION FUND PROJECT SUPPORT

This support is available for projects to address a gap or need in the market by developing innovations that will ideally be ready for licensing to Irish industry or may form the basis of a new start-up in 2-5 years. It is recognised however that some innovations may need a longer time to get to market than others. Proposals from all disciplines in the fields of Science and Engineering with costs ranging from typically €80,000 to €350,000 will be accepted. Projects with costs outside this range will be considered on a case by case basis.

PROGRAMME TIMETABLE

The programme has two published call dates for commercialisation fund project support applications annually. The call close dates are published on www.enterprise-ireland.com/commercialisation

Proposals can also be invited at any time by the Director of the relevant Technology Directorate (Lifesciences and Food Commercialisation, Information and Communication Technologies Commercialisation, Manufacturing, Engineering and Energy Commercialisation) in Enterprise Ireland 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. Additionally, proposals where the commercial case for the innovation has been well developed through interaction with the Technology Transfer or equivalent office and Enterprise Ireland may be invited for submission by the relevant Director.

ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY

All researchers in the third-level sector and non-profit research agencies and organisations in the republic of Ireland including staff on contract (e.g. Post-doctoral scientists) can apply.

NOTE: Due to the staged nature of the programme, commercialisation fund projects are typically not considered suitable for researchers completing PhDs or Masters qualifications.

PROJECT INFORMATION

CF project support proposals must structure project workplans in stages comprising 1-3 sequential stages depending on where the innovation is in the commercial pipeline and the amount of commercial and technical work required to develop it.

Each project stage will typically last 12-18 months and cost approximately €100K and it is expected that the commercialisation of the innovation will run in parallel with its development.

Proposals can include:

- Early development of a scientific concept submitted as a single-stage project

- Multi-stages including if required early stage development in stage 1 where a timeframe of up to 36 months is required for development of the innovation.
- For an innovation that is close to market a project will typically consist of 1 stage only with the expectation of licensing within 2 years.

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Read the Commercialisation Fund Programme Reference and FAQ documents.
2. Contact your TTO or equivalent office and Enterprise Ireland at least 1 month in advance of your planned submission to seek their advice on your proposal.
3. The contacts in Enterprise Ireland for the Commercialisation Fund Programme are:

| Enterprise Ireland Contacts: | | |
|------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Life-Sciences & Food | Majella Maher | Tel: 091 735927 majella.maher@enterprise-ireland.com |
| Information & Communication Technologies | Gerard Lande | Tel: 087 7778317 gerard.lande@enterprise-ireland.com |
| Manufacturing, Engineering and Energy | Barry Fennell | Tel: 01 7272562 barry.fennell@enterprise-ireland.com |
| Commercialisation Fund Programme Manager | Una Moran | Tel: 01 7272962 una.moran@enterprise-ireland.com |
| On-line System Administrator | Ann Carolan | Tel 01 7272374 ann.carolan@enterprise-ireland.com |

4. Register and create an applicant/researcher account on the on-line system at www.enterprise-ireland.com/commercialisation
5. Follow the guidance provided on the portal <https://enterpriseireland.smartsimple.ie> and in the on-line application form to create and submit your application on-line.

EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation process for CF project support applications 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 relevant external reviewer. The evaluation assesses a number of criteria 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 process if clarification on the application is required.

Proposals and evaluations are considered by review panels comprising for published calls relevant external reviewers chaired by the head of the relevant Enterprise Ireland Technology Directorate. The lead applicant may be contacted by arrangement during the panel meeting or following the meeting if the panel require clarification on the proposal. 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.

Note: The questions the evaluators consider in evaluating the proposals are detailed in Appendix 1.

APPROVAL PROCESS

The funding recommendations will be presented for funding decision to the IRCC following completion of the evaluations and panel meetings as outlined above.

The IRCC will make the final decision on proposals and the conditions to be attached to any given approval, for example the implementation of a change in the project arising from the evaluations and panel meetings.

FEEDBACK TO APPLICANTS

Applicants will be informed of the outcome of the evaluation and approval processes after presentation to IRCC. The evaluations and the panel comments will be fed back to successful, unsuccessful candidates and their associated Technology Transfer or equivalent offices.

POST APPROVAL-CONTRACT NEGOTIATION

For approved projects the grant will be awarded subject to the terms and conditions of a standard grant agreement/contract between Enterprise Ireland and the host institution and if relevant collaborating institutions.

The grant agreement will contain technical and/or commercial deliverables and additionally for multi-stage projects 'key' or 'go/no go' deliverables which will be used by Enterprise Ireland to assess project performance. These will be reviewed by Enterprise Ireland to determine if funding should be made available for the next stage of multi-stage projects.

For approved projects, the lead applicant will be sent details of the approved budget including details of any recommended budget cuts for the project, annex documentation where the commercial, technical and project management workplans, the deliverables including for multi-stage projects key (go/no go deliverables), project review meetings and reporting schedules will be detailed based on the original application and the changes approved by the IRCC. The lead applicant will work with the Enterprise Ireland Commercialisation Specialist assigned to the project to agree the annex. The annex and the IP declaration must be finalised and the Standard Grant Agreement for the project signed by Enterprise Ireland and the host institution and issued within 3 months of the IRCC approval. A joint Standard Grant Agreement will be signed by all collaborating institutions where each institution is to receive grant monies.

IP DECLARATION

The designated institution will be required to make a written declaration to the effect that its participation in the project does not give rise to a conflict of interest either on its own part or that of any of the research team. The institution will also be required to give a written declaration to the effect that it has a right to full and unfettered ownership of all IP generated through the project, that there is no arrangement in place or commitment given by the institution itself or any of the research team to any third party that could affect that right or attach conditions to it and that it will not enter into any such arrangement or commitment in the future without the prior written consent of Enterprise Ireland.

By signing the standard grant agreement, the host institution, TTO or equivalent and the research team are committing to exploit the outputs of the project. Projects should commence within 3 months of IRCC approval.

CONFIDENTIALITY

A condition of funding is that the applicants and the host institution accept that the primary purpose of the Commercialisation Fund is to produce innovations with potential for exploitation in Ireland. As a consequence, the protection of intellectual property and/or the ability to exploit the results must never be prejudiced by publication or other disclosure. However, Enterprise Ireland recognises that publication of results is an important and reasonable aspiration for researchers. The Institution, will therefore, use its best endeavours to ensure that a balance is maintained between the need to protect IP and the desire to publish. Nonetheless, applicants must accept as a condition of support under this fund that circumstances may arise wherein publication will be necessarily considerably delayed or even indefinitely deferred in the interests of protection of the intellectual property generated and the requirements of successful exploitation.

Please also note that as the Commercialisation Fund is co-funded by the ERDF, acceptance of funding is an acceptance of inclusion in the list of beneficiaries published in accordance with relevant ERDF regulations.

OWNERSHIP AND EXPLOITATION OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The designated host institution will own the intellectual property generated from the programme and will have exclusive first right to protect any IP that is deemed to have commercial potential. The host institution and TTO or equivalent will be responsible for exploiting the IP and the lead applicant will assist the TTO in the commercialisation process. The commercialisation of results from projects funded under the programme is governed by the national protocol for management of publicly funded Intellectual Property entitled "Putting Public Research To Work for Ireland"

The written consent of Enterprise Ireland will be required for the implementation of any plan for the exploitation of research results. Enterprise Ireland will work with the TTO as the primary contact in the relevant host institution to support the commercialisation of the project outputs. As stated, the primary intent of the Commercialisation Fund is to generate outputs for commercial exploitation opportunities within Ireland for the benefit of the Irish economy. As a result opportunities for exploitation outside Ireland will only be considered if there are no such opportunities in Ireland.

REPORTING AND REVIEW OF PROJECTS

Progress reports will be submitted to Enterprise Ireland as agreed in the standard grant agreement on a standard template provided by Enterprise Ireland. Enterprise Ireland will review the performance of the relevant project stage. The decision to release funding for the next stage of multi-stage projects will be based on the satisfactory achievement of the key (go/no go) deliverables.

PAYMENT OF THE GRANT

An advance against the project costs of the first stage of the project will be paid on signing of the grant agreement. The remainder of the grant for the project stage will be paid on completion of the project stage subject to the satisfactory achievement of the agreed deliverables. Each stage will be funded on the same basis.

TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL AUDIT

The basis of funding is the amount of the grant approved for the project or the actual cost whichever is the lower. All funded projects will be subject to financial and technical audit at the discretion of Enterprise Ireland and/or any other competent authority. The host institution is obliged to maintain appropriate financial, administrative (including timesheets) and scientific records to enable any such audits to be carried out.

This programme is co-financed by the European Union ESI (European Structural and Investment) funds through the ERDF. It is a requirement of ERDF funding that there be compliance with all funding regulations which include maintenance of all documentation (including timesheets) required for audit purposes, compliance with national procurement guidelines, EU procurement Directives and adherence to all publicity rules. Details of current European Union requirements are given in Regulations 1303/2013 and 821/2014.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Enterprise Ireland comes under the scope of the Freedom of Information Act 1997. This Act provides a legal right to individuals to obtain access to information held by public bodies, to the greatest extent possible consistent with the public interest and the right to privacy.

The Act provides strong protections for information supplied to Enterprise Ireland which is confidential, commercially sensitive or personal (Sections 26, 27 and 28 of the FOI Act refer). The Act also gives certain rights to individuals or companies who supply such information. These rights ensure that information which is confidential, commercially sensitive or personal cannot be released under FOI without the person supplying such information being consulted. There is also a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner, who is an independent authority for FOI matters.

APPENDIX 1:

Evaluators will assess the technology innovation, commercial case, project management, project team and project costs using the following criteria:

Innovation and Technology Development

Is the project innovative with potential to add technological value?

Has the applicant:

- described the technology/ies underlying the proposed innovation?
- provided satisfactory data on preliminary technical development work where applicable?
- described the innovative value / originality / novelty of the innovation?
- provided evidence of literature, patent searches to demonstrate the novelty of the innovation?
- outlined intellectual property issues that could either facilitate or adversely affect the exploitation of the innovation?

Commercial Opportunity

Is there a credible commercial opportunity for the Innovation?

Has the applicant:

- outlined the gap in the market the innovation will address?
- described a realistic end-market for the innovation including market size, trends and barriers to entry?
- detailed the competitors in the market?
- detailed the competitive advantage/s/USP of the innovation?
- validated the opportunity through engagement with potential customers/licensees/end-users/others?

Exploitation and Economic Impact

Is the commercialisation of the innovation likely to have an economic impact in Ireland?

Has the applicant:

- outlined the intended route to commercialisation?
- outlined how the commercialisation will have an economic impact in Ireland either through license to existing Irish industry or through a start-up?

Project Team, Workplan and Management

Is the project team, workplan and management appropriate?

Does the project have:

- a team with relevant skills and sufficient resources to successfully carry out the project?
- clearly described feasible, technical and commercial workplans?
- realistic project timelines?
- appropriate technical and commercial deliverables?
- risks and contingencies outlined?
- an appropriate distribution of tasks where relevant in collaborative projects?

Project Costs

Are the requested costs:

- realistic and appropriate to the project outputs?
- adequately justified for each category and project stage?