

S&E Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020

Implementation Plan: Commercialisation Fund

Operational Programme	S&E Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020
Priority	1: Strengthening RTDI in the S&E Region
Thematic Objective	1: Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation
Investment Priority	(b) promoting business investment in R&I, developing links & synergies between enterprises, research & development centres & the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product & service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological & applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities & first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies.
Scheme	Commercialisation Fund
Categorisation Code	062
ERDF Certifying Body	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Managing Authority	Southern Regional Assembly
Intermediate Body	Enterprise Ireland
Beneficiary	Universities and Institutes of Technology
Grant Rate	100% direct project costs
EU Co-Financing Rate	50% of public eligible expenditure declared

Objectives of Intervention

To foster and grow a dynamic and commercially aware research community and to create an environment that promotes entrepreneurship. In so doing an accessible route to commercialisation is established for the transfer of knowledge from the research base into industry.

Description of Intervention

Third-level researchers and researchers in other research producing organisations (RPOs) can apply to carry out applied research that may lead to licensing agreements and spin-out companies.

The programme will fund the development of innovations at all stages of the commercial pipeline to the point where they can be commercialised as new products, services and companies. This Fund will not support purely exploratory research, nor does it support applied research for companies.

Two funding supports will be provided:

- Feasibility support to investigate the commercial case for the innovation, technology, project idea;
- Commercialisation Fund support to develop the innovation/technology for commercialisation.

Researchers in third level institutions and non-profit research agencies and organisations in the Republic of Ireland are eligible to apply. The Commercialisation Fund programme leverages the research strengths and technical expertise in Irish HEIs to develop innovations that will have an economic impact in Ireland. Innovations including those aligned to the 14 areas of Research Priority that provide commercial opportunities which can be exploited by Irish companies operating in relevant markets or which create opportunities for new start-up companies are supported by the programme.

The Commercialisation Fund will contribute to the specific objective of the investment priority by supporting research organisations to develop a route to commercialisation for innovative technology-based projects, leading to the creation of R&D based spin-out enterprises.

Responsibilities of Intermediary Body

EI will manage this initiative through the Programme Coordination unit (within the Research & Innovation Business Unit) which, in collaboration with the agency's Policy Department is responsible for the design of the scheme, project selection and related information and publicity. It works closely with the agency's Finance Department in the administration and financial management of payments to the beneficiary bodies. EI is responsible for the selection/evaluation processes & ongoing monitoring of projects during the funding period. In so doing, EI ensures that a clear audit trail exists for external independent auditing of projects. An administrative agreement has been entered into between EI & the Managing Authority setting out the respective roles and responsibilities of each.

EI will ensure that the beneficiaries are provided with a grant award document setting out the conditions of support for each operation, including the specific requirements concerning the products or services to be delivered under the operation, the financing plan, the time limit for execution and the conditions for use of the Structural Funds IT System 2014-2020.

EI will be responsible for ensuring that all payment claims for European Structural and Investment Fund expenditure, submitted by the relevant beneficiary Institutions are supported by receipted invoices and audit documents, and that a clear and sufficient audit trail exists. Spot checks will be carried out by EI and/or by other bodies on their behalf on management and control systems in the HEIs. These checks will include procedures to verify the delivery of the research projects co-financed and the reality of expenditure claimed and compliance with applicable national and Community rules on, in particular, the eligibility of expenditure for support, public procurement, State aid - including the rules on the accumulations of aid, protection of the environment and the horizontal principles.

EI will also be responsible for ensuring in respect of co-financed Intervention/projects, that only eligible expenditure actually incurred is submitted to the Managing Authority. EI is responsible for the certification of all expenditure incurred by the HEIs.

Responsibilities of Public Beneficiary Body

The beneficiary bodies will support individuals and groups of researchers to successfully execute their duties in respect of delivering the project output. This support will be in the form of grant administration, financial management and control, the scoping and submission of applications, the certification of eligible expenditure, compliance with issues such as public procurement and tax clearance along with providing expert advice on commercialisation through the technology transfer office. This support will be provided in conjunction with mirroring support from EI's Research & Innovation Business Unit.

The beneficiaries will be responsible for ensuring in respect of co-financed Intervention/projects, that only eligible expenditure actually incurred is submitted to EI.

The contribution of the Irish exchequer and the European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 will be acknowledged in all promotional material, annual reports, research laboratories and websites relevant to the co-funded awards, by use of appropriate logo and text references. EI will ensure that the beneficiaries comply with publicity requirements.

Integration of Horizontal Principles

Following the screening of the EI co-funded schemes, the following actions will be taken:

1. To monitor & report the gender balance on the Board, Executive Committee, Investment Committee, Industrial Research & Commercialisation Committee and R&D Committee. While Enterprise Ireland is conscious of the need to have gender representative decision making boards and committees, the Ministerial appointment to the Enterprise Ireland board & the filling of tenders for private sector members on Committees as well as internal appointments is based merit, i.e., on the appropriate mix of skills to ensure balance & rounded decision making as well as compliance with the code of corporate governance for semi-state bodies. In summary, the person with the most appropriate skills will be appointed. This is also the view of the Institute of Directors, i.e., that board appointees must be on merit first and foremost.
2. Monitor and report on the gender balance of lead researchers approved for commercialization project funding.

Selection Process and Criteria

Selection Process

Applications from researchers for Commercialisation Fund supports will be evaluated for their commercial and if appropriate to the support technical merit by internal and/or external evaluators. Funding recommendations for feasibility support will be considered by relevant senior management in Enterprise Ireland who will make the funding decision. Funding recommendations for Commercialisation Fund support are presented to the Industrial Research and Commercialisation Committee in EI for approval. This committee is currently composed of senior members of EI, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, the Department of Agriculture, the IDA, senior academics and independent industrial experts and members of the business community.

Selection Criteria

Projects are assessed for their commercial merit and technical merit by internal and in some cases external reviewers and panels which may include external experts. The evaluation criteria considered by reviewers in assessing proposals include:

1. Commercial opportunity;
2. Exploitation potential (Economic Impact in Ireland);
3. Innovation;
4. Project team;
5. Project Management and Workplan;
6. Project Costs.

Appeals

- Clients have the right to contact their DA to discuss committee decisions;
- Clients have the right to appeal to the Secretary to the Board;
- Clients can re-apply as often as they wish.

Performance Indicators

Priority-level Output Indicators: Investment Priority 1(a)

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
1.3	No. of commercialisation fund awards	No. of awards	ERDF	More Developed	325	EI	Annual

Programme-Specific Result Indicators: Investment Priority 1(b)

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Category of Region	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
1b	Increase in the no. of licenses as a result of research	No. Licenses	More Developed	24	2013	25	EI	Annual

Financial Management

The gross public expenditure in respect of projects funded under this intervention will be provided annually in the estimates of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation from SubHead B4 of the Department's Vote. EI draws its funding from the Office of Science, Technology and Innovation of DJEI. Grants will include the ERDF contribution, which will be reclaimed by the Certifying Authority for the benefit of the Exchequer. Claims, once approved & certified, in respect of ERDF assistance will be submitted to the Commission by the Certifying Authority.

The beneficiary institutions will be responsible for implementation of the intervention at local operation level. As the final beneficiaries in the cascade of reporting, they will be responsible for ensuring that only actual eligible expenditure incurred, and

expenditure which comes under the terms of the research project(s) as approved, is certified. They will be required to ensure a clear audit trail exists in relation to EU co-funded expenditure and that all claims are supported by receipted invoices or, where this cannot be done, by accounting documents of equivalent probative value.

The beneficiary body will be required to have in place separate accounting arrangements in respect of project expenditure under the sub-measure.

Document Retention

In accordance with Article 140 of the Common Provisions Regulation (EC) 1303/2013, EI and the HEI's will ensure that all supporting documents regarding expenditure, verification checks, certification and audits on operations for which total eligible expenditure is less than €1,000,000.00 are kept available for the EU Commission and Court of Auditors for a period of three years from 31 December following the submission of the accounts in which the expenditure of the operation is included. In the case of operations over €1,000,000.00 all supporting documentation shall be kept for a 2-year period from 31 December following the submission of accounts in which the **final** expenditure of the completed operation is included. The Managing Authority will inform EI and the HEI's of the start date of the period referred to above.

Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements

The necessary reports will be provided in the required formats that are to be agreed with the Managing Authority. A dedicated unit within EI be responsible for the compilation of data and reporting. These actions will be facilitated by a recently upgraded, dedicated IT system.

Information and Publicity

The contribution of the Irish exchequer and the European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 will be acknowledged in all brochures, promotional material, press releases, publicity activity, advertisements, signage, applications forms, annual reports, letters of offer, etc., by use of appropriate logo and text references. A dedicated commercialisation communications unit within Enterprise Ireland will be responsible for continued promotion of the scheme and commercialisation in general. This may include advertisement campaigns, road shows, and dedicated websites. EI will ensure that the beneficiaries will comply with section 2.2 of Annex XII of Commission Regulation 1303/2013 and with Articles 4 and 5 of Commission Implementing Regulation 821/2014.