Innovators' Initiative

OPEN COMPETITIVE CALL
GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Key Dates	
Call Opens	Thursday 23rd February 2023
Submission Deadline	Monday 17th April 2023 at 12pm (noon)

Executive Summary

Innovators' Initiative is a national initiative with a regional impact that will provide a vital component of human capital and infrastructure through the delivery of a skills and talent pipeline that supports Ireland's economic goals.

The objective of this scheme is to develop new immersive-based needs-led innovation training programmes, closely aligned to the priorities of the regions' Regional Spatial & Economic Strategies (RSES) and Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3), as well as the Enterprise Ireland Strategy 2022-2024: Leading in a Changing World. This training will attract high calibre individuals and inter-disciplinary teams who, through their immersion and observation of real needs in their immersive environment and the use of a design methodology, will be supported to generate new product and process ideas, new IP and in some cases, the creation of high potential-start-ups (HPSUs). These programmes will build on existing international and national best practice connecting on multiple levels with the industry sector clusters in the Northern and Western Region, the Southern Region and the Eastern and Midland Region.

Innovators' Initiative programmes will be hosted in Irish publicly funded Research Performing Organisations (RPOs) or within consortia of Irish RPOs based in the Republic of Ireland. These training programmes will create cohorts of highly skilled innovators who can observe and identify unmet market needs within specific sectors of growth in Ireland. Upon completion of an Innovators' Initiative programme, the participants can return to their sectors, bringing their new skills and training back to the sector thereby raising the absorptive capacity for innovation in their company or can form founding teams with the ambition to avail of Enterprise Ireland's Commercialisation Fund and HPSU supports.

Applications are sought from publicly funded RPOs from areas of sectoral importance to its region and Ireland. Successfully awarded programmes will each focus on a specific sector of regional and national importance and will articulate the industrial strength and research capability of the region in which the programme is to be based. It is likely that only one programme in each sector will be awarded.

Applications should be strongly aligned with the following publications: "Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy", the relevant "Regional Enterprise Plan" and the relevant "Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES)". Applications should also consider the "Climate Action Plan 2023". Additionally, applicants should ensure that their programme will respect the "enabling conditions" including the EU Horizontal Principles, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of persons with Disability as detailed in EU and ERDF Funding regulations under which this programme will be co-funded.

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Glossary of Terms

- **Actors** – the real-world actors who are working and operating in established sectoral settings and are continually navigating problematic/sub-optimal workflows.
- **Fellows/Participants** - high-calibre, experienced individuals from industrial, commercial, technical, and other specialized backgrounds including but not limited to Clinical, Legal, Economic etc. who are undergoing entrepreneurial training that enables them to discover unmet industrial needs and align them with market opportunities. Rigorously selected to contribute and grow their skills, knowledge, and expertise as part of multi-disciplinary teams that are embedded and immersed in specific industrial settings.
- **HPSU** – High Potential Start-Up – A new company that is internationally focused and has the potential to employ at least 10 people within 3 years of starting and to generate revenues of at least €1 million.
- **Immersive Environment** – a real-world operational environment within an established sectoral setting, where there is scope for innovation and is accessible by Fellows/Participants for minimally constrained observations and needs identification.
- **Initiative** – refers to the overall Innovators' Initiative and the multiple programmes running within it.
- **KOL** – Key Opinion Leader – A trusted expert in a particular field.
- **Programme** – refers to a specific Innovators' Initiative programme hosted by an RPO and targeting a specific sector.
- **RPO(s) -** Research Performing Organisation(s) - universities, institutes of technology and other publicly funded research institutions primarily publicly funded. For the purposes of this document readers may interchange RPO with consortium of RPOs if needed.
- **Sectors/Domain** - Distinct grouping of companies and/or organisations engaged in similar activities within the economy.
- **TTO -** Technology Transfer Office is the name often applied to the team at a university or technological university responsible for managing knowledge transfer or technology transfer services including intellectual property, licensing, partnering with industry and the creation of new companies.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Ireland's national innovation system is a critical platform upon which much of Ireland's economic and social development is dependent. It attracts Foreign Direct Investment and generates new ideas, technologies, skills, knowledge and solutions which have proven to be transformative to our prosperity and the way we work and live. Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) is globally recognised as the key economic differentiator.

Enterprise Ireland innovation activities directly support disruptive spinouts, high potential start-ups (HPSUs), micro-SMEs, scaling enterprises, indigenous multinationals and even foreign owned food related multi-nationals. Our innovation activities extend this scope to State and Semi State bodies and foreign owned multinationals. All of these provide resources and spaces for those communities to act and interact in using innovation to enhance their impact. Every Enterprise Ireland programme and every activity we undertake are defined responses to industry, market requirements and the opportunity to have economic impact.

As part of the Northern and Western Regional Programme 2021-27 managed by the Northern & Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) and the Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021–2027 managed by the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA), Enterprise Ireland was nominated as an intermediary body to deliver the new Innovators' Initiative and launch a competitive National Call for publicly funded research performing organisations (RPOs) located in the Republic of Ireland to establish, host, and operationalise regional Innovators' Initiative Programmes in sectors and industry domains of economic importance to the regions and Ireland.

Overview of the call

Calls for proposals are welcome from RPOs in the Republic of Ireland to establish and run individual Programmes of the Innovators' Initiative that build on sectoral strengths in the regions.

Applicant RPOs will need to demonstrate their connectivity with a relevant industry sector and their ability to immerse their Programme Participants into real-world operational environments with minimal constraints to observation in order to identify unmet sectoral needs. It is anticipated that RPOs will leverage their existing relationships with large multi-nationals, indigenous industry, representative bodies and other stakeholder environments and locations within the targeted sector, such that a sustainable critical mass of immersive environments is available to the participants throughout the duration of the initiative.

Proposals are welcome that address any industry sectors of national and regional importance. Applicants should provide a convincing case as to why they have selected a given industry sector and why their RPO or RPO consortium is well connected and best placed to establish and deliver an immersive, needs-led innovation training programme in that sector. Each proposal must focus on a single industry sector.

Applicants should note that the economic and environmental importance of industries at national and regional levels has been articulated within the "National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027" (S3) and the "Climate Action Plan 2023". All proposals should be aligned with these strategies.

1.2 Innovators' Initiative Vision

The Innovators' Initiative's vision is to:
• Drive and leverage innovation in sectors of strategic economic importance to the regions and Ireland.
• Build the next generation of HPSUs.
• Raise the level of research, development, and innovation (RD&I) in established Irish companies, enabling them to deliver sustainable growth in the future, supporting regional strengths and capabilities.

Under the Innovators' Initiative, Enterprise Ireland will support several training Programmes across Ireland, hosted in Irish publicly funded RPOs. Each Programme will reflect the national importance of the sector selected as well as industrial strength and research capability of the region in which the Programme is based.

Each funded Programme will provide exceptional quality, reproducible, sector-specific immersive, needs-led innovation training to cohorts of high-calibre Programme Participants who may subsequently continue their innovation journey by later joining product development teams in existing companies, thereby raising the innovative capabilities of the sector, or by leveraging downstream research commercialisation funding (accessible with the support of an RPO) or start-up supports to create investable, scalable HPSUs.

1.3 Innovators' Initiative Objectives

- Create new, needs-led innovation training programmes in sectors that are of economic importance both regionally and nationally.
- Leverage the research talent, programme management expertise and teaching and training capabilities of Research Performing Organisations regionally and nationally.
- Drive a sustainable increase in entrepreneurial activity at regional and national levels by providing Fellows with access to structured, sector-specific innovation training programmes.
- Increase the number and quality of HPSUs via its Programme Fellows.
- Increase investment activity within the associated sectors.
- Increase employment and exports in the longer term leading to balanced regional and national prosperity.
- Provide an impetus to expand regional enterprise innovation, contributing to growth and prosperity by helping and enabling regions to focus on their strengths as highlighted in their respective RSES's and Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy.

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Cómhaoinithe ag an
Aontas Eorpach
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NORTHERN & WESTERN
Regional Assembly

Tionól Réigiúnach an Deiscirt
Southern Regional Assembly

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2.0 Innovators' Initiative

The Innovators' Initiative will consist of separate Programmes that will each contribute to the Initiative's vision and objectives and the development of the regions which they are located in. Each Innovators' Initiative Programme will provide each Programme Participant with structured, practical training in suitable needs-based innovation methodologies, and parallel in-depth exposure to a relevant, real-world, immersive environment. Innovators' Initiative graduates will form cohorts of highly skilled innovators who can observe and identify the unmet needs within specific sectors with a view to designing next-generation technologies and innovative business models that will address those needs.

It is anticipated that each Innovators' Initiative Programme will have a collaborative structure similar to the one illustrated inFigure 1, where the key elements include the Participant/Fellow at the core of the programme, as well as the Host RPO, Sectoral Support, an Immersive Environment, and an appropriate Methodology for authentic identification of needs.

In this section, readers will find an outline of each of these collaborative elements.
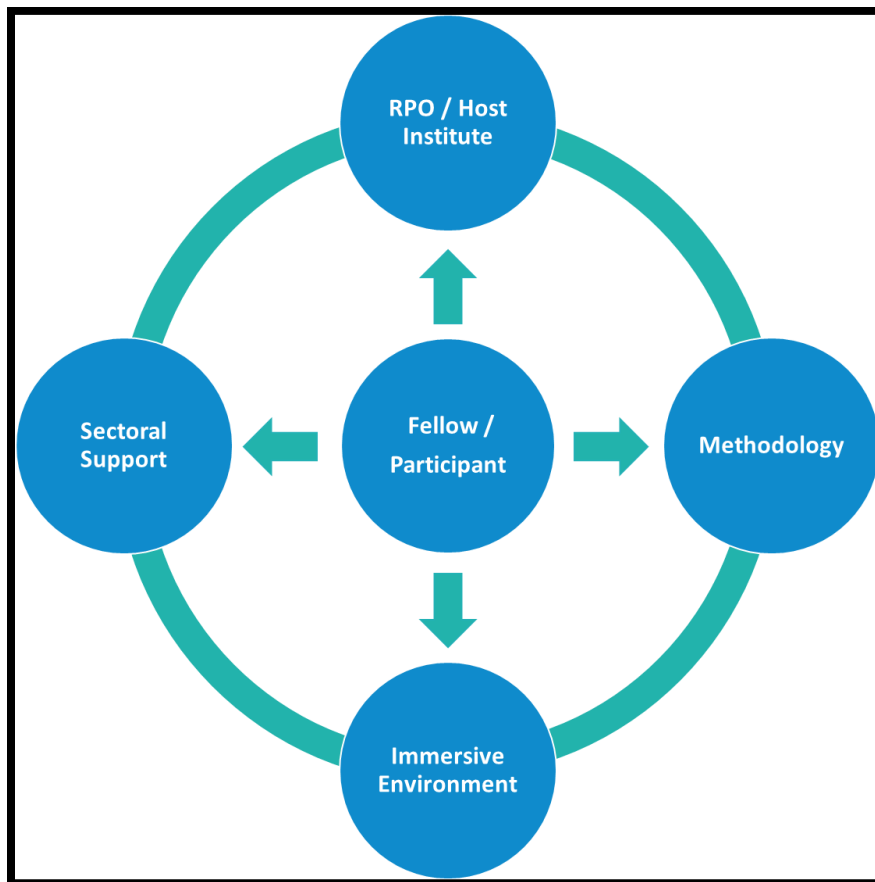

Figure 1: Anticipated Collaborative Structure for Innovators' Initiative Programmes

International experience of immersive, needs-led innovation training programmes globally, indicates that the following sample components (this list is not exhaustive) are key to the growth and operational performance of a successful Innovators' Initiative Programme:

- The high quality of the domain and industry knowledge within, and available to, the Programme Delivery team, Host RPO personnel and Programme Participants
- Robust governance and reporting structures
- Identification of and access to a suitable innovation methodology, contextualised for a given industry domain
- Innovation models expertise and ability to transfer knowledge on the practical application of the innovation methodology to the Programme Participants during the programme
- Participant recruitment, management, and training
- Facilitated access to a suitable immersive environment
- High quality mentorship – by Programme team
- Leadership and Programme Participant development
- External mentor engagement/recruitment
- Outreach/Programme promotion (internal and external)
- Collaboration – nationally and internationally
- Programme evolution/iteration
- Creation of defined environment for Participants (space/ethos/culture/inclusive environment)

2.1 Host RPO

The Host RPO is a critical component of an Innovators' Initiative Programme, providing deep connectivity to structured and relevant innovation training and applied research capability.

It is expected that by the Host RPOs selection of, and access to, a suitable innovation methodology, the immersive training environment, and the proposed formal academic qualification, that the participants will register for and attain at the end of the programme, will be set out clearly in the proposal document.

Participants **cannot be engaged in professional activity** while receiving full-time instruction at an Innovators' Initiative Programme. It is the Host RPO's responsibility to establish appropriate controls and procedures to comply with regulations pertaining to the stipend arrangements, see section 3.5 Participants' Stipends and other Costs and Scholarship exemption (revenue.ie).

Applicant RPOs will provide detail of the proposed Governance and organisational structure of the Leadership team, including Programme Director, Programme Management team and Programme Support team role descriptions, numbers of staff and FTE commitment, and mentors.

RPOs will need to commit to the provision of an Equality Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) plan to include targets within the first six months of the Programme start date and outline how they will achieve gender balance across the Participant teams, Programme Delivery team, steering and advisory committees.

Governance

Immersive, needs-led innovation programmes are bespoke offerings within a Host RPO, and will operate in a challenging environment across their various stakeholders[1]. An appropriate governance structure to enable this is of benefit to programme operations and outcomes.

Applicant RPOs will propose a governance structure with an organisational chart detailing responsibility, stakeholders (internal and external) and levels of oversight and reporting lines. An indicative governance and reporting structure for the programme within a Host RPO may include:

- Senior Host RPO Sponsor (a senior university management team member)
- Programme Delivery team (Programme Director, Programme Management team (e.g., Programme Manager and/or Operations Manager), Programme Support team)
- Steering committee within the Host RPO/RPO consortium environment (directors, managers, mentors, TTO/Innovation office)
- Advisory Panel[2]

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[1] Participants/other Key Stakeholders including Funders/Collaborators
[2] Internal senior management, industry and sectoral specific leaders and influencers and other Key Stakeholders

*An advisory panel could encompass representatives from government agencies, industry, funding organisations, programme funders, investors (angels and VC), international sector specific KOLs, and potentially alumni. Advisory panels should also provide foresight for the Programme relative to the sector of focus.

A suitably qualified Senior Host RPO Sponsor at senior management level within the Host RPO is required to enable interaction with wider RPO leadership and key roles in the institution (e.g., with President, Vice Presidents for Research, Technology Transfer Office Director etc.) and is expected to be identified within the RPO proposal document. This candidate will be skilled in innovation and entrepreneurship, understand the target sector, have expertise in innovation models, and mentor and enable research commercialisation and collaboration. This will normally be an existing senior member of academic or administrative staff; however, a suitable external candidate may be appointed, who will dedicate a minimum of 50% of their time to the Programme.

The Programme will involve the recruitment of an experienced and suitably qualified Programme Delivery team, who will be led by a Programme Director employed by the Host RPO. Ideally the Programme Director is appointed on 100% FTE basis, however other arrangements may be considered.

Applicant RPOs are expected to set out detailed job descriptions and role specifications for all proposed positions (including salary levels and the minimum mandatory and desired qualifications and experience) as part of their application.

The Programme Director can be supported by an experienced Programme Manager and Operations Manager (the Programme Management team), ideally with strong links across internal departments to add value to the Programme Delivery.

In addition to the Programme Delivery team, the Programme will require support mentors – typically both internal staff with domain expertise that contribute time to support Participants and Programme growth and external mentors from the Host RPO ecosystem. Mentors can support participants to map out the steps involved towards future commercialisation of their proposed solutions and towards HPSU formation as appropriate.

Please refer to the section 3.0 Funding and Cost categories for further details and requirements.

Execution Team

The Programme Director within the Host RPO must have authority and support from Senior Management within their organisation and be suitably committed in terms of time and effort to the successful creation and delivery of the Programme.

Working within the Programme Delivery team, the Programme Director will be responsible for integrating the new Programme and its Participants into the required facilities and services within the RPO in a timely manner.

The Programme Delivery team will have primary responsibility for delivery and management of all aspects of the training and the progress and wellbeing of the Programme Participants. Within a Host RPO, the Programme Delivery team and Participants will require the support of several offices during and post Programme, including:

- Senior level members of upper management e.g., President, Vice President for Innovation, Director of Innovation, Academic Secretaries, Bursar
- Technology Transfer Office (TTO)
- Research accounts and research funding offices
- Guidance and input from support offices such as information technology, buildings, fees, academic affairs

The provision of key services from the Host RPO to make the Programme a success will be expected to be set out by the Host RPO in a Service Level Agreement (SLA) or equivalent to be included as an appendix to the proposal document. In the SLA, applicant RPOs should detail the level of FTE support (where appropriate) from the above offices dedicated to the Programme design, onboarding, and establishment of operations. The SLA should reflect the various elements of the Programme and set out the intended responsiveness of the relevant parts of the RPO to the needs of the Programme Delivery team and to the Programme Participants including, notably during e.g. their onboarding, their registration, procedures managing dispute resolution, performance, their introductions to potential Principal Investigators (PI) partners for subsequent Commercialisation Fund proposal development and timely mobility to other RPOs post training (if relevant) to continue research commercialisation.

Metrics

An initial metrics and KPI framework will need to be included in the Application Form and will evolve with the maturity of the Programme in the Host RPO. A successful grant award will result in the development of an operational plan once the Programme Delivery team have been recruited. The operational plan will detail clear assignment of the responsibilities and timelines for Programme metrics and KPIs to key members of the Host RPO and the Programme Delivery team. Successful RPOs will be required to update Enterprise Ireland annually on their KPIs (see 5.7 Performance Indicators), and progress will be evaluated as part of future review processes. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion metrics will also form part of this evaluation.

Hosting

Housing the Programme in a suitable dedicated location within the Host RPO will facilitate interaction and collaboration between Participants and the Programme Delivery team. Applicant RPOs are expected to provide details on Programme housing and facilities.

Ideally facilities space provided by the RPO would include:
- Dedicated, secure co-working space for Programme Participants

- Collaboration spaces that are suitably secure
- Meeting room(s) with video conferencing facilities
- Suitable IT access
- Suitable office space for Programme Delivery team
- Prototyping space/materials if required
- Transport access for guest speakers/mentors

Space should be solely dedicated to the Programme. Experience from previous host sites demonstrated that placing the Participants in shared study rooms across the wider RPO proved disruptive to the environment and impeded the Participants.

IP Management

The creation, capture, protection, and development of Intellectual Property (IP) is key to achieving commercially viable outputs from a Programme. The Programme Delivery team and the Technology Transfer/Innovation Office of the Host RPO will be expected to put standardised and workable intellectual property training, management, and commercialisation processes in place. In addition, the Technology Transfer/Innovation Office will be required to work with the Participants to identify and protect any IP generated during the Programme.

Taking the National IP Protocol into account, the host RPO must create IP management and inter-institutional licensing processes to facilitate the timely mobility of Programme Participants. Upon completion of a Programme, Participants must have the flexibility to select which RPO is best suited to the needs of their future Commercialisation Fund proposal, even if this means relocating to a different RPO from where they completed an Innovators' Initiative Programme.

Applicant RPOs are requested to provide detail of the IP management arrangements for the Programme within their application, and timeline of communication and engagement with candidates/Participants/downstream research commercialisation projects.

For guidance on the National IP Protocol please reference:
http://www.knowledgetransferireland.com/About_KTI/Reports-Publications/The-National-IP-Protocol.pdf

Smart Specialisation Strategy

As an "enabling condition" of ERDF funding, Ireland is required to have a Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) fulfilling criteria set out by the European Commission. Smart Specialisation is an innovation policy concept that aims to boost regional enterprise innovation, contributing to growth and prosperity by helping and enabling regions to focus on their strengths. The European Commission has stipulated that S3 should determine RD&I funding. The Innovators' Initiative is ERDF co-funded and as such, applicants will be required to demonstrate via their application, and ongoing reporting to Enterprise Ireland over the

duration of the programme, how they are working to support the regional priorities as set out in Irelands Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3)[3]

Progress Reports, Financials & Performance Metrics

The Host RPO will be fully responsible for the overall financial and administrative co-ordination of an Innovators' Initiative Programme ensuring the successful operation of the programme and delivery of the targets. Reporting requirements will be agreed between Enterprise Ireland and the Host Institution. Progress reports will serve as the basis for performance review and will determine the level of continued funding. Such reporting requirements will be included in the grant agreement, which is binding between the Host Institution and Enterprise Ireland.

As this Initiative is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), all successful applicants shall comply will all ERDF requirements in terms of, inter alia, reporting on key metrics, submission of expenditure declarations, communications and maintenance of records as detailed the Common Provision Regulations (EU) 2021/1060.

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[3] https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/national-smart-specialisation-strategy-for-innovation-2022-2027.html

2.2 Sectoral Support

Applicant RPOs will need to demonstrate their linkages to the proposed industry sector and their ability to access immersive environments (see Section 2.3) for Programme Participants. While it may not be possible to identify all key stakeholders at proposal submission stage, there is an expectation that a critical mass of relevant entities, advisors and mentors, and other necessary stakeholders will be identified as the initial programme ecosystem and will be already committed to support that RPO's Programme.

Innovators' Initiative Programmes that are recommended for funding will be focused on sectors of existing and future long-term importance to the regions and Ireland and aligned to regional priorities outlined in Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy. It is expected that any sector chosen by applicants will already have sufficient scope and strength that their proposed programme can build on; it is not intended that programmes funded within this initiative will be the starting point to build a nascent sector from the ground up. Sectors selected by applicants for their proposal should present areas with significant opportunity for innovation and be able to sustain a pipeline of validated market needs for the duration of the Programme's lifecycle.

Elements that are beneficial to growth and sustainability of Innovators' Initiative Programmes may include, but are not limited to:

- A well-developed sector network with indigenous SMEs and MNCs
- Sectoral support for start-up generation
- An accessible supply of entrepreneurs in, or attracted to, the sector
- A sector of sufficient breadth and longevity to annually supply multiple product and market opportunities to cohorts of Programme Participants
- A sector capable of attracting funding from the national and international investor community.

Alignment with the "National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027" and the "Climate Action Plan 2023" is required for all applications.

The role of an industry sector in an Innovators' Initiative Programme may include:

- The provision of authentic, immersive environment(s) for Programme Participants.
- The ability of the sector to provide a pipeline of high calibre participants via the industry sectors' existing local, regional, and international networks over the Innovators' Initiative lifecycle.
- Access to and support from industry advisors, mentors, and investors as well as access to the Programme's curriculum and to the Programme Participants via the existing local, regional, and international networks.
- Participation of representatives from the industry sector on Programme Advisory Board and other Programme committees, including but not limited to assisting with the recruitment process for Participants, brainstorming workshops, pitch sessions, etc.
- Driving collaboration opportunities between HPSUs created via the Programme and the existing industry base of the sector.

There are potential direct/indirect benefits to an industry sector that derive from the Participants completion of a programme of this type. They include, but are not limited to:

- An enhanced talent pool of highly skilled innovators and designers specialising within the industry sector
- An increase in entrepreneurial activity and intensity within the industry sector
- Increased innovation in the industry sector and stronger supply chains
- The attraction of high calibre Programme Participants to the industry sector, potentially including Programme Participants from overseas, where the intention is to relocate to Ireland
- The potential creation of scalable, investible HPSUs that will contribute to the vibrancy and diversity of the industry sector
- The potential for new job creation within the industry sector and its associated regions via new HPSUs locating there in the future

2.3 Immersive Environment

Evidence of the suitability and access arrangements to an authentic immersive environment is of the utmost importance. The long-term success of the Programmes will be dependent on their ability to identify and sustain unfettered access to the immersive environment and the real-world actors within it to identify unmet market needs over the lifecycle of the Innovators' Initiative.

The quality and authenticity of the immersive environment provided is vital to the success of the process. Programme Participants need access to directly observe the real-world actors, workflows, pain points, data, constraints, and incentives across the spectrum of a given sector. This access ensures the accurate identification of needs and forms the basis for establishing an expert network that is of immeasurable value in the validation of new market opportunities. The immersive environment needs to be consistently and repeatedly afforded to each cohort of Programme Participants so they have the opportunity to identify, rank and select commercially valuable problems to solve, which will be the basis of downstream breakthrough innovations, intellectual property creation and commercialisation of novel innovative products, services, and business models.

Critical components of immersion include the commitment and willingness of the immersive environment to enable:

- Unfettered access to all actors, workflows, requisite data, locations, incentives, and challenges, ensuring legal, ethical, regulatory (e.g., GDPR), reimbursement[4], and intellectual property challenges are understood and managed.
- Knowledge sharing and facilitating access to network opportunities to broaden immersive reach.
- Appropriate engagement of actors after the defined immersive period. Ideally immersion is observation based, and the length of the immersive period is set to allow comprehensive and in-depth investigation.

The immersive environment must be neutral from an Intellectual Property (IP) perspective. Insofar as the provider(s) of the immersive environment(s) must not be able to assert any ownership, pre-emptive or other rights over any IP, whether registered or unregistered, created by the Participants during the immersive phase. RPO applicants are expected to explicitly detail the IP arrangements in place with providers of immersive environments so that there are no IP encumbrances or background IP issues arising from the immersion phase of the Programme.

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[4] This refers to the reimbursement challenges for downstream commercialisation of healthcare technologies

2.4 Methodology

A successful Innovators' Initiative Programme will train Programme Participants in an applied, experiential, practical, innovation methodology that is appropriate to the sector in question – coupled with formal access to a suitable sector-specific immersive environment.

Successful Programme outputs will result in the formation of multi-disciplinary teams who have identified and prioritised an unmet or underserved need, coupled with a clear commercial case, a viable technical approach, and a commercial plan validated by Key Opinion Leaders and investors to address the need.

Each RPO must select and document an innovation methodology that will be appropriate and effective for their chosen industry domain. Core tenets of a successful Innovators' Initiative Programme involve a combination of sector-specific design thinking, entrepreneurship training, careful selection of Participants and team formation, ideation, and commercial de-risking with specific focus on barriers to innovation in the target market.

Critical to the success of an Innovators' Initiative Programmes is:
a) the in-depth exposure of Programme Participants to a relevant, real-world immersive environment
b) the identification and validation of a high-value problem to solve in extensive detail
c) refinement and definition of the underlying market need
d) mapping and strategy development of the key technical, regulatory, commercial, and other barriers to market entry

The selected innovation methodology should include the following components:
- **Ideation:** This is conducted with a view to:
  a) further understanding of the problem being addressed
  b) identifying potential solutions and associated commercial barriers and identifying avenues for further applied research
- **Validation Phase:** In depth technical and commercial validation of a selected need, associated solution, and proposed route to market including data/milestones required
- **Post-Training Phase:** Guidance/mentorship on relevant sources of research commercialisation and relevant networks is key to the long-term success of the Host RPO's Programme

Beyond the core innovation methodology each Innovators' Initiative Programme will need to develop processes for the following:
- **Recruitment:** Each Host RPO will be responsible for developing a marketing and recruitment strategy that will lead to a pipeline of high-calibre candidates, expert in their respective fields, seeking to join the Programme and become part of its cohort intake. These candidates will already have demonstrated career progression and their participation in the Programme represents a significant commitment on their part. Participants cannot be engaged in professional activity while receiving full-time instruction at one of the Innovators' Initiative Programmes. Equality, diversity, and inclusion (ED&I) best practice should be incorporated into the marketing and recruitment strategy.

- **Onboarding and Initial Training:** The Programme will have in place an onboarding process that will enable:
  a) network introductions and access,
  b) team formation and building,
  c) applied and practical needs-led innovation experience,
  d) domain knowledge acquisition relevant to the immersion.
- **Team Formation:** High-calibre candidates, expert in their respective field, are formed into multi-disciplinary teams. This ensures knowledge and breadth of skillsets to achieve needs-led innovation, and potential for downstream research commercialisation and potential HPSU formation.
- **Immersion Phase:** Defined length of in-depth immersion of Programme Participants in an authentic, immersive environment, allowing them to directly interact and have access to observe the real-world actors, workflows, constraints, data, and incentives across the spectrum of a value chain in each sector or industry domain. This approach is a critical and essential element of needs identification, enabling the Participants to identify gaps and opportunities within the sector.
- **Research and Down Selection Phase**: Immersion provides evidence and data for potential problems, and validation is needed from multiple angles both technical and commercial. Data generated allows for selection from hundreds of potential problems to a small subset with clear technical and commercial opportunity.

2.5 Fellows / Participants

The Programme will involve the annual recruitment and training of a cohort of high-calibre Programme Participants, who will originate from a diverse set of professional, commercial, and technical backgrounds. The anticipated Participant profile is experienced professionals, with demonstrated working knowledge of industry (in, or parallel to, the target sector). They will have the ability to function well in a team and high-pressure environment, be self-motivated, have a learning and growth mindset, not risk averse, with an appetite for entrepreneurship or research commercialisation post Programme. Participants will be assigned to multi-disciplinary teams as they progress through their immersive Programme training. The Programme is required to be a full-time training programme for its duration and Participants will not engage in any additional academic teaching or demonstration activities whilst on the Programme.

The onboarding and training process for Programme Participants necessarily includes classroom instruction, team formation, boot-camps, in-depth exposure to an environment during an immersion phase, needs identification, needs screening, needs validation, needs prioritisation, solution ideation and business case preparation that addresses existing technical, commercial, regulatory, and other barriers to innovation.

When submitting their proposal to host an Innovators' Initiative Programme, Applicant RPOs will need to document their Participant recruitment process including, but not limited to, the blend of technical or commercial sectoral experience required and other expertise required on a team, candidate identification strategy, recruitment, ensuring ED&I best practice for recruitment and candidate selection process. Applicants should also articulate how international Participants will be accommodated, including registration fees.

As individuals (companies may not participate directly in the Programme), such professionals are highly impactful, however the combination of such people into multidisciplinary teams provides the breadth of talent and skills to undertake the level of work required for a thorough needs analysis. Teams with a balance of skillsets and disciplines are well poised to take on the further challenge of downstream research commercialisation and potential HPSU creation. Project team formation is a challenging part of recruitment in needs-led innovation training Programmes. The Programme Delivery team must balance expertise within project teams e.g., technical/commercial/other expertise, rapport, the ability of individuals to collaborate effectively, alignment of personal and team goals for shared objectives and geographic location/re-location.

Successful Innovators' Initiative Programmes will have a detailed strategy for team formation, team compatibility and ongoing collaborative performance and functionality assessment, team guidance, mentoring, support structures, ongoing leadership development and management of teams and post-Programme support.

Initially, the likely minimum intake target number of Programme Participants is nine, assuming three teams of three, rising to twelve Participants by year three and beyond. If other team configurations are proposed and considered appropriate (due to e.g., sectoral differences) these can be set out in the

proposal document. Applicant RPOs are expected to set out an ambitious programme plan over and above this minimum target for recruitment, with expected programme intake increasing after the initial establishment phase in years one and two. The annual intake of Participants will also need to reflect the practicality and necessity of providing each Participant with in-depth access to an immersive environment where they can directly observe the real-world actors, workflows, constraints, and incentives across the spectrum of a given industry sector.

Post Graduate Qualification

Programme Participants who successfully complete the Programme, will be assessed and eligible for conferring of a postgraduate qualification either directly via the host RPO or indirectly via a partner RPO or suitable Higher Education Institute. When applying, RPOs will need to outline the intended duration of the Programme and how accreditation will be achieved by the Participant via the Host or partner RPO.

The proposal should also set out all applicable student registration fees for Participants and how they will be managed during the onboarding process. The Participants are required to be full time on the Programmes, and it is the responsibility of the host RPO to set the stipend up correctly so that the participants can receive it tax free. It is the Participant's responsibility to comply with the stipulations of the scheme.

Innovators' Initiative Programme Alumni

The deliberate development and cultivation of a strong Programme Participants alumni network over time will be a key asset to enable ongoing Programme optimisation/feedback, network access, peer mentorship, Programme promotion and ongoing recruitment of new high-quality Participants. A formal alumni network should be incorporated into the methodology that allows observation and tracking of Participant (and therefore Programme) impact beyond Participant graduation.

Innovators' Initiative Programme alumni will be sought after by established companies in our economy as leaders in innovation and many will likely embark on their own founding journeys, where they will have access to Enterprise Ireland's Commercialisation Fund (within and in partnership with an RPO) and High-Potential Start-Up supports.

3.0 Funding and Cost Categories

3.1 Overview

Operating an Innovators' Initiative Programme is associated with significant costs, including the Participant stipends, the salary costs of the Programme Delivery team, related academic support, external experts, conference and subscriptions, international travel, etc.

The total Innovators' Initiative budget is anticipated to be €30m, of which €19.6m is allocated to the Southern, Eastern & Midland Regional Programme 2021-2027 and €5.9m is allocated to the Northern & Western Regional Programme 2021-2027. The ERDF co-funding is 40% for projects in the Southern Region and the Eastern and Midland Region. The ERDF co-funding is 60% for projects in the Northern and Western Region. Additional funding was also made available from the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment totalling €4.3m. Contracts will last up to seven years.

Subject to due diligence and proposal assessment, multi-annual funding will be provided to cover several key elements of such a Programme including but not limited to:
- Recruitment of a suitable full-time core Programme Delivery team with expertise in target sector and innovation methodology
- Training of Programme Participants in the practical application of a needs-based innovation methodology
- Equipping or refurbishing a suitable space for the Programme Participants (capital equipment or infrastructure are not eligible)
- Hiring of key expertise to deliver discrete Programme elements, where justified
- Programme Launch costs
- Buyout of hours for key RPO academic staff to allow their committed programme engagement, a suitable part time Programme Director
- Procurement of an innovation methodology under license (if required)
- Participants: conferences/engagement/needs validation with relevant parts of a given industry value chain
- Programme Mentors: travel (nationally and internationally) to engage and train Participants
- Programme Delivery team to travel (nationally and internationally) to understand best practice, collaborate, source complementary funding, ensure growth and awareness of programme outputs and offerings
- Conference and subscription costs

As the Innovators' Initiative is based on training, **no RPO research overhead** will apply. All Programme costings provided by applicants need to be itemised and justified. Programme value for money will be one of the selection criteria in assessing proposals. **Only publicly funded RPOs located in the ROI can apply for this funding**.

3.2 Programme Delivery Team Costs

The Programme Delivery team costings assume each Programme will require a Programme Director, Programme Manager and/or Operations Manager, and potentially part-time Programme Support team. The salary levels used will be based on the published University Senior Administrative Pay Scales with Programme Director at Senior Admin II, Programme Operations Manager at Senior Admin IV, and Programme Support team at Executive Assistant. These are inclusive of PRSI and Pension allowance. Abovementioned salaries assume that the nominated Programme Director will already be on payroll, and if hours need to be bought out, then those additional Programme Director programme-related costs should be included. The Programme Director is expected to dedicate a minimum of 50% of their time to the programme. **At the inception of a new programme, the Host RPO should include a formal declaration of commitment to ensure sufficient time is dedicated by the Programme Director and their participation will be assessed annually.**

3.3 Programme Management Support Costs

Where itemised and justified, Programme costs will be eligible to cover travel of the Programme Delivery team, hiring of external mentors and professional trainers, license fees for innovation methodologies and software, and recruitment costs. Appendix 2 outlines the eligible and ineligible expenses.

3.4 Once Off Establishment Costs

Once-off establishment costs will be permitted in Year 1 only. Where justified, once off establishment fees (excluding capital costs) are allowed for refurbishment of dedicated space for Programme Participants and Programme Delivery team, senior staff recruitment, launch of Programme, training of trainers etc. Ongoing space 'rental' is assumed to be provided by the RPO without ongoing charge to the Programme thereafter.

3.5 Participants' Stipends and Other Costs

Stipends for Programme Participants are estimated at €35k per Programme Participant and costings above allow for 1% inflation during the life of the initial seven-year programme. Additional costs of €5k per Programme Participant are allowed for national/international travel, subsistence at immersive environment, materials, etc. These costs are indicative, and applicants should derive and justify their own cost basis. It is estimated that there will be an intake of 9 Programme Fellows in Years 1 and 2, and 12 Programme Fellows from Year 3. If the Applicant RPO intend to take in 12 Participants from Year 1, a strong justification must be provided to support that intention. To that end, Host RPOs will apply for stipend funding on an annual basis – to allow overall stipend funding to flex according to demand from each programme. Where there is higher demand, additional requests for stipend funding can be made based on actual numbers of Programme Participants recruited per intake. Stipend costings included above are for illustration, however Applicant RPOs should include their target Programme Participants recruitment commitments, forecasts, and costings within their proposal document.

In summary, the overall cost estimate is €6 million per programme, inclusive of stipend costs.

The programme will be independently evaluated at an interim point(s) and at the end of the funding cycle to assess performance against the defined KPIs. The number of programmes funded under this call will depend on the quality of proposals received, programme demand, regional balance and sectoral focus of the proposals received.

Applicant RPOs are expected to provide financial modelling detailing funding requirements and costings during:
(1) the setup phase in Years 1&2 and
(2) from Year 3 to the end of the funding period as the Programme becomes more established in each Host RPO.

Each Programme will be subject to a mid-term review, and further or continued core funding from Enterprise Ireland will be based on performance against an appropriate set of targets and operational KPIs.

4.0 Statutory Basis

4.1 Legal Basis

The Innovators' Initiative costs are provided to National Research Providing Organisations under the 1987 Science & Technology Act

4.2 State Aid Basis

The support under the Innovators' Initiative will only be granted to organisations in circumstances where Enterprise Ireland is satisfied that the funding would not fall under Article 107(1) of the Treaty, i.e. where it does not amount to State Aid. Applicants must therefore demonstrate that they meet the criteria determining categorisation as 'Research and Knowledge Dissemination Organisations and/or Research Infrastructures' to be deemed eligible, as set out in the European Commission Framework for State Aid for research and development and innovation (2022/C 414/01). This will be validated by reference to the State Aid Check List (please see the State Aid Check List in the Application Form). Enterprise Ireland will review applications and supporting documents and may ask applicants to provide further evidence.

4.3 Eligible Applicants and Ineligible Applicants

- The Innovators' Initiative is open to publicly funded RPOs and/or consortia of RPOs based in the Republic of Ireland
- Ineligible applicants: a) Individual companies, b) clusters of companies or c) sectoral representative bodies cannot apply directly for funding nor are they eligible for direct funding via the programme budget.

4.4 Sources of Funding and its Management

While overall responsibility for managing the funding rests with the Managing Authorities of the Southern, Eastern & Midland Regional Programme and the Northern & Western Regional Programme, Article 71(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060[5] allows that the Managing Authorities may identify one or more intermediary bodies to carry out certain tasks under its responsibility. The Managing Authorities have identified Enterprise Ireland as the Intermediate Body for the delivery of the Innovators' Initiative.

Tasks to be carried out by Enterprise Ireland under the supervision of the Managing Authorities in respect of the Innovators' Initiative Programme include:

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[5] REGULATION (EU) 2021/1060 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy

- Selection of operations in accordance with Article 73 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060
- Provision of a document to the beneficiary setting out all the conditions for support for each operation in accordance with Article 73 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060
- Monitoring and evaluation of the progress of operations in fulfilling the conditions for support and in meeting the objectives of the Regional Programme
- Ensuring that the obligatory elements of audit trail set out in ANNEX XIII of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 are maintained in accordance with the requirements set out in Article 82
- Carrying out management verifications in accordance with Article 74 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

Enterprise Ireland, as Intermediate Body, will manage the Innovators' Initiative Programme and will work closely with the Managing Authority(s) to ensure that it is delivered in full compliance with Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, Regulation 2021/1058[6], and all relevant national and EU regulations and guidance, with a particular focus on state aid, public procurement, data protection, fraud prevention, eligibility, and grant administration.

The gross public expenditure in respect of projects funded under this intervention will be provided annually in the estimates of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (DETE) from Subhead B4 of the Department's Vote. Enterprise Ireland draws its funding from the Office of Science, Technology and Innovation of DETE. Grants will include the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2021-2027 contribution, which will be reclaimed by the Accounting Function from the EU Commission for the benefit of the Exchequer. Claims, once approved and certified, in respect of ERDF assistance will be submitted to the Commission by the Member State's Accounting Function. The programme will be co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund at the following rates: 60% for projects located in the Northern-Western Region and 40% for the Projects located in the Southern Region and the Eastern and Midland Region. The overall cost of the Initiative is estimated at €30m and each contract will last until the end of the funding period of 31st December 2029 subject to the ongoing achievement of the agreed performance targets.

Upon receipt of the annual financial claims from the beneficiary, Enterprise Ireland, or its agents, will carry out management verifications in accordance with the requirements of Article 74 of Regulation 2021/1060. These verifications will verify that the co-financed products and services have been delivered, that the operation complies with applicable law, the programme and the conditions for support of the operation.

The management verifications shall be risk-based and proportionate to the risks identified ex ante and in writing. Management verifications shall include administrative verifications in respect of payment claims made by beneficiaries and on-the-spot verifications of operations.

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[6] REGULATION (EU) 2021/1058 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund

5.0 Assessment

All applications under this initiative are subject to cross disciplinary assessment by a minimum of three independent assessors prior to funding approval.

5.1 Call Conditions

Applicant RPOs are eligible to apply as a single RPO or as part of a consortium, however the practical implications of a consortium approach will need to be set out in the proposal including e.g., economic benefit considerations, duplication of funding, the complementarity of the RPOs involved, the need for focused RPO leadership of the programme, the effect of multiple locations on the Programme Participants, etc. If applying as part of a consortium, a lead applicant is required and must take responsibility for leading and hosting the Programme and organising the reporting flows across the partners and associated stakeholders.

A second proposal from an RPO is permitted, provided the proposal relates to a different sector or industry domain to the RPO's other submission. A maximum of two applications from one RPO is permitted. Should two proposals that are successful at evaluation stage be led by the same RPO, it is the intent of Enterprise Ireland to fund one proposal per RPO, but the final decision will be at the discretion of Enterprise Ireland.

It is Enterprise Ireland's intention to have a strong regional dimension to this Initiative. Consideration will be given to the provided evidence of strong, collaborative and geographical links with the appropriate sector aligned to Regional Priorities outlined in Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy, which will be necessary to provide the correct level of immersive access.

5.2 Application Process

An Applicant will be required to submit a fully completed application form which clearly addresses the required project evaluation criteria as set out in the call document.

It is anticipated that Applicants will consider the following as part of their submission:

- Geographic proximity of the host institution to a critical mass of relevant stakeholders in the chosen sector.
- Validated appetite and interest from the target sector – evidence of deep consultation and alignment with all relevant stakeholders from the sector.
- The provision and recruitment of domain expertise in needs led innovation training, design thinking etc.
- Clear knowledge of the barriers and routes to market for new products in the sector selected and demonstrated capability in translation of market needs through to deployment in companies, spin outs etc.

- Ability to develop the commercial de-risking aspects of a needs-led methodology specific for the sector.
- Ability to access an appropriate immersive environment relative to the chosen sector that facilitates needs identification for that sector.
- Access to potential candidates and associated recruitment strategy.
- Access and connectivity to industry mentors/advisors and private equity investors (VCs/Angels/HNWIs).
- Access to the Host RPO facilities and in case of a consortia application to partner RPOs' also.
- Demonstrated buy in from senior leadership within the Host RPO and in case of a consortia application within partner RPOs also, to provide all the necessary resources and support (including from within the RPO) to ensure successful Programme delivery.
- Intended formal qualifications or certification in e.g., entrepreneurship, innovation, or design thinking.

5.3 Calls for Proposals

Call opens on **Thursday 23rd February 2023.**

Call closes on **Monday 17th April 2023 at 12pm (noon)**

Enterprise Ireland may open additional calls for proposals in relation to this initiative subject to the budget availability.

5.4 Application and Assessment Processes

Completed applications must be received before **12.00 hrs (noon)** on Monday 17th April 2023**.**

Completed applications should be submitted by email to: innovatorsinitiative@enterprise-ireland.com

Applications received after 12.00 hrs. on the date of the call close will not be considered.

Please note that eligible expenditure can only be incurred after the contract signature.

An Applicant will be required to submit a fully completed application form which clearly addresses the required project evaluation criteria as set out in in 5.5 Evaluation Criteria section of this document.

The Horizontal Principles, as detailed in the ERDF regulations, for Applicants/Beneficiaries are integrated into the application process and have the following requirements:
- All beneficiaries must confirm that they have taken steps to prevent any discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation and accessibility for persons with disabilities and that they take account of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union during the preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of programmes.

- All beneficiaries shall confirm the promotion of sustainable development including the 6 principles of "Do No Significant Harm (DNSH)" - climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, the sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources, the circular economy, including waste prevention and recycling, pollution prevention and control to air, water, and land and the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem.
- All beneficiaries are encouraged to consider and report on any positive contribution their activities can have in supporting the 6 principles of DNSH.

The full application form is available in Appendix 1.

Pre-evaluation: Each application will be assessed by members of the grant administration team within Enterprise Ireland to firstly ensure the application is eligible for evaluation and this assessment will include:

(a) Confirmation that all the required sections have been completed and the application is signed by an authorised officer of an eligible institution and has been received by the closing date.

(b) Confirmation that the proposed activities are consistent with the call documentation and Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy, and that the project has not commenced prior to selection.

(c) Confirmation that the funding will not be utilised to fund capital equipment or infrastructure.

(d) Confirmation that the activity respects the 6 principles of "Do No Significant Harm (DNSH).

(e) Host RPO commitment and support, to include alignment with Horizontal Principles: sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, and equality between men and women.

(f) Confirmation that applicants have effective mechanisms in place to ensure that all public procurement is consistent with National and EU procurement legislation.

(g) Confirmation that any State Aid would be lawful and that the applicant is eligible to receive grant aid at the requested level within the State Aid regulations, if applicable.

(h) Confirmation that any aid granted through the project to third parties is permissible under and would be managed in accordance with State Aid regulations.

(i) Confirmation that applicants have effective mechanisms in place to ensure compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNDRPD).

(j) Confirmation that the application does not include activities which were part of an operation subject to relocation in accordance with Article 66 or which would constitute a transfer of a productive activity in accordance with point (a) of Article 65(1) of the CPR.

(k) Confirmation that the application is not directly affected by a reasoned opinion by the Commission in respect of an infringement under Article 258 TFEU that puts at risk the legality and regularity of expenditure or the performance of operations.

Note: It is the Host RPO's responsibility to ensure the integration of the Horizontal principles throughout the scheme to ensure compliance with ERDF funding.

Evaluation will be performed following the call close and will consist of 4 stages.

Stage 1: Due diligence will be performed for all received applications by the Programme Management and the Grant Management teams to identify eligible applications. All eligible proposals received before the deadline will then be evaluated against the relevant evaluation criteria. The assessment of all eligible applications will be completed by an Evaluation Panel consisting of internal and external experts put in place for this call by Enterprise Ireland.

Stage 2: The Evaluation Panel members will each assess all eligible applications based against the call evaluation criteria. Applicants may be invited to present their proposal to the panel via video call or in person; this will also involve Q&A after which each application will be awarded a preliminary score by each evaluator.

Stage 3: Projects receiving preliminary scores will then be discussed at a separately convened meeting of the Evaluation Panel. The Evaluation Panel will discuss their respective evaluations/assessments/scores – and a final recommendation and overall ranking of programme proposals will be made.

Stage 4: Selected project proposals will be recommended for funding to Enterprise Ireland's relevant committees and Board as appropriate for approval. Enterprise Ireland reserves the right to reduce or disallow proposed costs, or to schedule some or all the costs in stages over the term of the funding. Enterprise Ireland reserves the right to not fund any proposal until contract annex negotiations are completed to Enterprise Ireland's satisfaction and contracts have been issued and countersigned by appropriate signatories from the relevant RPO.

Any potential conflicts of interest that may arise during the evaluation process will be managed according to the Enterprise Ireland Policy on Conflicts of Interest.

Note: Ireland's Climate Action Plan is focussed on prioritising low-carbon investments when using public funds. Therefore, proposals funded via this call must neither hinder the achievement of Ireland's climate objectives nor have other significant negative environmental impacts. Proposals will be expected to demonstrate, as much as possible, a positive contribution to the sustainability targets in the Climate Action Plan.

Enterprise Ireland is committed to ED&I within Enterprise Ireland and the programmes we support. Applicant RPOs should provide a copy of their written ED&I policies or a commitment to develop an ED&I programme action plan within six months of signing the host contract as well as outline how they will strive for gender parity across the Participant teams, steering committee and advisory board. Successful RPOs will be required to update Enterprise Ireland regularly on their progress, including ERDF reporting requirements.

The above is subject to, and fully contingent upon, final programme and budgetary approval within Enterprise Ireland.

5.5 Evaluation Criteria

The following evaluation criteria and weightings will be used during the assessment process. Each proposal must provide full details on how their proposal meets each of the evaluation criteria as per Table 1.

Table 1. Evaluation Criteria for Innovators Initiative Proposals

Evaluation Criteria	Weighting
The connectiveness of the RPO to relevant stakeholders in that industry domain/sector and their support for, and involvement in, the proposal.	25%
Quality and authenticity of the immersive environment to be provided to Programme Fellows in the chosen industry domain/sector	25%
Quality and appropriateness of the resources and commitments of the RPO to successfully host and operationalise the programme; proposed governance and staffing arrangements; Quality and detail of the SLA provided; budget breakdown.	20%
Quality and appropriateness of the innovation methodology chosen and its applicability to the chosen industry domain/sector	15%
Relative economic benefit and the importance of the industry sector/domain to the region and Ireland, to include alignment with Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy	15%
Total	**100%**

The final score will be an average consensus score of the panel members. **A threshold mark of 70% is required for the application to be considered for funding.**

Once scored, the panel may propose one of the following 3 recommendations to the Enterprise Ireland programme management team:
• Recommended for funding as presented
• Recommended for funding subject to a set of specified conditions / clarifications
• Not recommended for funding

The relevant Programme Manager will then write a paper summarizing the outcomes of the evaluation process and request contracts be approved and issued to match these recommendations.

Approval: Where the value of the individual contracts is less than €1.2million, this approval is given by the Industrial Research & Commercialisation Committee (IRCC) under delegated powers of the Enterprise Ireland Board. For contract values greater than €1.2million the IRCC recommends the contracts for approval to the Enterprise Ireland Board, who give the final approval. Each contract will last for up to 7 years subject to the achievement of the agreed performance targets.

5.6 Appeals

Enterprise Ireland's procedure for dealing with appeals is as follows:

- Potential beneficiaries have the right to contact the Innovators' Initiative Programme Manager to discuss committee decisions.
- Potential beneficiaries have the right to appeal to the Secretary to the Board of Enterprise Ireland.
- If appeal is successful, re-application will be invited.

5.7 Performance Indicators

Enterprise Ireland has responsibility to report on KPIs for this Initiative which are set in the Northern & Western Regional Operational Programme 2021-2027 and Southern, Eastern & Midland Regional Operational Programme 2021-2027 and the Beneficiaries will be required to contribute to this reporting requirement. The indicators are as follows:

Indicator Name	Measurement Unit
Number of Fellows completing a needs-led innovation training programme	Participants
Licensed Technologies	Intellectual Property Licenses
Number of HPSUs created as a result of the completed training	Enterprises

Additionally, a KPI framework will be developed on a per Programme basis as part of the contract negotiations and will be based on the scale and ambition of the Programme proposed. Metrics will be focused on outcomes indicators and will reflect the scale and maturity of the Programme. KPIs may include the following indicator, subject to the final contract negotiations and signature:

- Participants trained
- Number of validated needs
- Commercialisation Fund applications submitted
- HPSUs created
- Participants moved to industry
- Participants moved elsewhere
- Patents filed
- Alumni Events
- Peer to peer mentorship

6.0 Review

An interim progress review of the Innovators' Initiative will be carried out by an independent supplier appointed via an open tender. The focus of the review will be to ensure that the Initiative is meeting its objectives as agreed with the Enterprise Ireland Board. Where the Initiative is found to not be performing, then the Board of Enterprise Ireland may recommend corrective actions, up to and including, the orderly cessation of the Initiative or separate Programmes.

As a part of the overall Initiative review, individual Programmes will be assessed. This review shall examine performance against key performance indicators and other targets contained within the grant agreement and subsequent operational plans submitted to Enterprise Ireland.

At the end of the funding cycle, a full programme review will be completed to evaluate if the programmes may be funded for a potential subsequent funding cycle. The duration of potential future funding cycles will be set by Enterprise Ireland taking available state and EU funding streams into account.

7.0 False Statements

Enterprise Ireland will treat any false or misleading statements as a serious matter, which may be used in legal proceedings against the maker of any such statement or any applicant entity of which they are an officer.

8.0 Confidentiality, Publicity & Disclosure of Information, Updates of Documentation

Enterprise Ireland has a statutory obligation of confidentiality to its clients and will not disclose any information except as required by EU and Irish law, including the Freedom of Information (FOI) Acts 2014, the Data Protection Acts 1998 and 2003 and the General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

Enterprise Ireland's Client Charter is available to read in full at

https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/About-Us/Services/Client-Charter/

In accordance with Article 82 of EU Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, without prejudice to the rules governing State aid, the beneficiary, shall ensure that all supporting documents related to the Programme are kept at the appropriate level for a 5-year period from 31 December of the year in which the last payment by the Managing Authority to the beneficiary is made.

This Call Document and other relevant materials may be amended and updated as necessary at the discretion of Enterprise Ireland.

The contribution of the Irish exchequer, the European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027 and the role of the Northern and Western, and the Southern Regional Assemblies as Managing Authorities must be acknowledged in all brochures, promotional material, press releases, publicity activity, advertisements, signage, application forms, annual reports, letters of offer, etc., by use of appropriate emblems, logo and text references. This may include advertisement campaigns, road shows, and dedicated websites. Enterprise Ireland will ensure that the beneficiaries will comply with the visibility, transparency and communication requirements outlined in Articles 46-50 and Annex IX of the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) 2021/1060, and the national and Initiative level guidelines.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Application form

Appendix 2: Financial Claim Non-Eligible Cost Guidelines – Innovators' Initiative Programme

Appendix 1 – Application Form

Innovators' Initiative Application Form

Appendix 2 – Financial Claim Non-Eligible Cost Guidelines – Innovators' Initiative Programme

The salaries, PRSI and pension costs of additional programme staff and the Participants' stipend are eligible at cost for reimbursement.

This programme is a training programme, so the costing basis is marginal programme costs and not research costs per the usual Standard Grant Agreement.

Therefore, **the non-eligible costs** are revised as follows. This list is non-exhaustive.

- Any interests, or return on capital employed
- Provisions for potential future losses or charges
- Interest owed
- Provisions for doubtful debts
- Resources made available to a Grantee free of charge (e.g., salaries for Academic Director on HEA funding staff)
- Unnecessary or ill-considered expenses
- Marketing, sales and distribution costs for products and services, however reasonable marketing costs associated with the recruitment of Participants by the Programme can be claimed if justified.
- Entertainment and hospitality expenses except such reasonable expenses accepted as wholly and exclusively necessary for carrying out the work.
- Fees and penalties (including prompt payment interest). Except fees for the license of essential training methodologies
- Recruitment costs, except the initial costs for senior members of the delivery team
- Redundancy costs
- Relocation costs
- Interview expenses
- Subsistence payments to visiting personnel not on the payroll of the institute may be claimed only on a receipted basis and if justified
- Protection of Intellectual property rights
- Cost of courses (unless the course relates directly to the core activity supported)
- Membership fees (unless the membership relates directly to the core activity supported)
- Subscription costs (unless the subscription relates directly to the core activity supported)
- General stationary may be claimed only on a receipted basis and if justified
- Office Equipment (excluding capital equipment) may be claimed only on a receipted basis and if justified
- General phone charges
- Capital Infrastructure or Building Costs
- Provision of workspace may be claimed based on non-capital renovation or repurposing of workspace on a once off basis and subject to national procurement guidelines

- Books, standards and technical publications or subscriptions may be claimed only on a receipted basis and if justified and related to the core activity
- Any items which are detailed as Miscellaneous or General
- Advertising (except for recruitment of Participants)
- Consultancy (EI have set a limit of €900/day inclusive of all travel and expenses) only for essential mentorship and training purposes and agreed in advance through the application and funding agreement process.
- Travel & Expenses (unless destination, duration and activity are appropriate)
- Petty Cash (unless there is justification and receipts in all cases)
- Company Start-up Costs

There are no overhead payments pertaining to this programme.