



FUSION
The R+I
Programme

**FUSION R&I Commercialisation Voucher Programme
2014-2020**

Programme Procedures

| Version | Date |
|----------------|-------------|
| 7.0 | May 2016 |

The Process

The Commercialisation Voucher Programme presented below, is a sequential process and an essential precursor to the Technology Development Programme. The scheme is supported through the Malta Research and Innovation (R&I) Government funds and is managed by the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST). The programme consists of five vouchers attainable in three stages and a number of subsequent optional vouchers that may be taken ad-hoc, if the project is successful in its application under the Technology Development Programme. Figure 1 below highlights the nature of each stage in more detail.

The durations quoted for each stage reflect the maximum permissible time windows provided to approved service providers to complete a service whilst, the quoted prices, represent the maximum chargeable rates, pre-negotiated with the Council, and are exclusive of VAT.

All applications received are subjected to a Scientific Opinion Evaluation. The 8 top scoring submissions, across all the Smart Specialisation Areas are then offered a Voucher Agreement and invited to proceed to Stage 1 - IP Check. The stages are then followed sequentially. Progression from one stage to the next requires a positive review of the previous stage (>50%) from a technical expert evaluator approved by the Council.

Progression to the Technology Development Programme is only possible upon the successful completion of stages 1 to 3 (>350 points out of 500 – this is the essential pass mark), together with a positive evaluation of the comprehensive project proposal initially submitted by the applicant. Successful completion of all stages is imperative for acceptance of a Technology Development Application but does not automatically guarantee the acceptance.

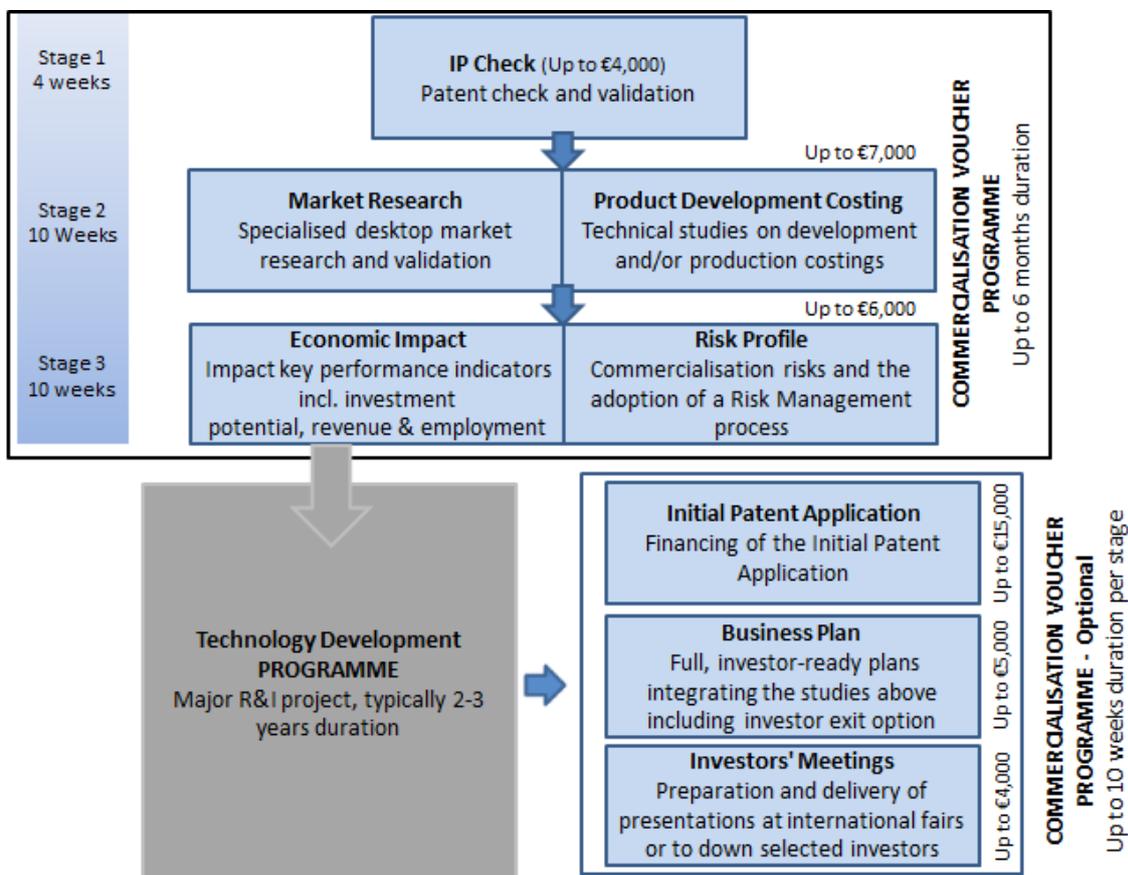


Figure 1: Sequential Phases of FUSION

1. Application Assistance

Information on the programme is available on the Council website (<http://www.mcst.gov.mt/fusion-ri-programme>) and will be supplemented by information sessions prior to each Call. Applicants are encouraged to familiarise themselves with all the information available online, such as, all the relevant documentation as well as Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's), prior to approaching the Council. The R&I Programmes Unit will address any administrative enquiries and can review and/or discuss draft applications with candidates. Further information can be obtained by calling either Ms. Allanah Bonnici on 23602152 or Dr. Melchior Cini on 23602153.

2. Calls for Applications for the Commercialisation Voucher Programme

Two Calls for Applications are issued per year. The first Call was opened on the 5th of January 2016 until noon on 22nd of February 2016. The second Call was opened on May 2nd and will close at noon of June 27th 2016. Calls are announced on the Council's website, including all relevant documentation. Upon receipt of an application, a Scientific Opinion evaluation will be initiated. The Call results will be published within 20 working days from the end of the Call. The first stage of the Programme will then ensue for successful applicants.

3. Submission of Application

Only completed application forms will be accepted. The application form must be fully finalised, dated, signed and initialised (stamped or signed) on each page by the entity's legal representative. The application should also include a signed State Aid declaration and VAT Form, completed by all private, public and academic entities. The State Aid Declaration and the VAT Form are obligatory and the applicant retains ultimate responsibility for the veracity of their content.

All electronic submissions should include, both a word version and a signed PDF version, and may be sent to voucher.mcst@gov.mt keeping allanah.bonnici@gov.mt and melchior.cini@gov.mt in copy. Alternatively, interested parties may submit their application by hand at the Malta Council for Science and Technology, Villa Bighi Kalkara. In the case of the latter, a CD including a copy of the application form in word format should be annexed to the application form.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure the timely and correct delivery of the application to the Council. The Council shall provide a return email or written acknowledgement as proof of receipt. The applicant should contact the Council if acknowledgement of receipt has not been communicated within 2 working days.

4. Priority Areas and Scientific Evaluation

Priority will be given to applications that are aligned to the smart specialisation areas as defined in the National Research and Innovation 2020 Strategy (<http://mcst.gov.mt/all/policy-strategy/national-research-innovation-policy/national-research-and-innovation-strategy>). Following the closure of the call, the Council shall submit the application to two independent and external evaluators for a scientific opinion evaluation, the outcome of which is averaged, resulting in a final score. A threshold of 65/100 is required for acceptance. The scientific opinion external evaluators are bound by confidentiality through a non-disclosure clause in their contract of engagement with the Council.

The top scoring proposals within each smart specialisation area shall be selected. Priority will be given to an even coverage of applications across the different areas. In cases where the total Call Financial Allocation has not been reached, the Council may, at its discretion, consider applications which are not aligned to the smart specialisation areas.

5. Granting of Vouchers

5.1 Acceptance Meeting

Once an application is selected for funding, the beneficiary will be given an Acceptance letter, two copies of the Voucher Agreement and an Inventor Disclosure Form covering all or, where applicable, part of the first three stages. The last two documents must be returned to the Council, signed and initialised or stamped on each page within 5 working days. The Voucher Agreement is valid for all three stages, subject to the previous stage having been successfully completed and approved by the Council.

Failure to return these documents in time, will automatically nullify and render the Voucher Agreement invalid.

Subsequently the first acceptance meeting will be set-up by the Council. This meeting is chaired by a Council representative and brings together the applicant and the assigned service provider.

During the acceptance meeting, beneficiaries will be asked to provide a confidential overview of their project to the Service Provider. The latter is bound by confidentiality through a non-disclosure agreement within their contract with the Council. A copy of this NDA may be provided to the beneficiary upon request.

Should the beneficiary put forth any objections towards the assigned service providers, these will be taken in due consideration and a new service provider will be assigned. The objections must be justified and are restricted to maximum of two per stage.

5.2 Other Notification

Following a successful beneficiary-supplier matching through the first acceptance meeting, the Council shall issue a Voucher letter to the beneficiary confirming the start of the first stage. The letter shall also contain the validity period of the voucher. Any extensions are at the discretion of the Council and subject to a justified cause. Therefore, both beneficiaries and suppliers should aim to ensure the timely execution of the voucher activities.

5.3 Documentation and Engagement of Service Providers

Upon notification of the grant by the Council, the service provider shall provide an engagement contract to the beneficiary for completion and subsequent signature. Thereafter, the two parties can proceed to communicate without the Council's intervention until the validity of the voucher is concluded or the voucher report is submitted to the Council.

6. Evaluation of Voucher Activities

Once the Service Provider finalises the report it is presented to the Council for onward forwarding to an independent expert evaluator. These are also bound by confidentiality through a non-disclosure clause within their contract of engagement with the Council. The evaluator is provided with a 7 day period for completion of their report. Should the result of the evaluation result in a score greater than 70/100, feedback on the outcome, together with observations shall be provided to the beneficiary by the Council through electronic mail, together with a confirmation to proceed to the next stage of the voucher programme. For scores between 50 and 69/100, the Council may set up an evaluation meeting, in which both the Service Provider and the Beneficiary shall be called in to be present. Evaluation meetings are intended to support both the beneficiary and service provider to address key issues and shortcomings within the report presented to the Council and/or to address any arising issues since doing so could potentially improve the score for the

project. An extension for revision of reports may be provided at the Council's discretion. Beneficiaries can provide clarifications through the service provider without changing the original idea, that is, any clarifications should not encompass a redeveloped idea. Beneficiaries that would like to modify the original idea can reapply under a subsequent call subject to reassessment of the amended project idea. Should a service provider clearly conclude a report by stating that the project is not viable, the Commercialisation Voucher Programme shall be halted. Also, for evaluation scores of 49/100 or less, the Commercialisation Voucher Programme shall immediately be halted.

7. Reimbursement

The Council relies on the requisition of funding from central government and will ensure that payments are ordered such that they can be received close to the completion of the respective voucher stage.

Once the Council clears the report, the Beneficiary will be advised to proceed with the payment to their supplier.

Reimbursement to the beneficiary will only be granted when an official payment receipt is presented.

Reimbursement rates are 100% for academic and public institutions and 75% for private entities.

Note: Prices quoted within this document are exclusive of VAT. The Council shall only reimburse VAT that is non-refundable.

8. Related Documents

- Application Form
- FUSION Activity Guidelines
- FUSION Rules for Participation
- VAT Declaration Form
- Inventor Disclosure Form