

MCST-CNES Space Bilateral Fund

Building capacity in the Maltese Space Sector

A programme supported by CNES, the French Space Agency



Rules for Participation 2019

Version 1.0

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1 Introduction

This competitive Call for Applications issued by the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) is based on MCST's internationalisation initiatives relating to Space-related research and technologies. The scope of this call is to fund the costs related to the Maltese participation in collaborative projects with the Centre National d' Études Spatiales (CNES), the French Space Agency, or any delegated/associated entities.

1.1 Background

Tasked with the governance and coordination of space-related matters in Malta, the *Malta Council for Science and Technology* has over the past years been putting effort on related capacity building. As stated within the very first National Space Policy, published in 2017, despite the importance of awareness-raising measures, a more focused capacity-building approach is often necessary. Considering Malta's infancy, yet interest in the sector, it is well recognised that training, collaborative and funding opportunities for research projects, as well as internationalisation efforts where possible, provide the means for developing critical mass. Capacity-building measures should be focussed on national needs, yet with due consideration given to European initiatives and programmes. Such consideration ensures European-calibre development to help reduce disparities between established players and emerging ones like Malta. This approach would enable Malta to be in a better position in terms of accessing space-related European Union funds and markets and the eventual provision of new products and services.

It is well recognised that the establishment and implementation of collaborative agreements with key space players is an important building block to help build local capacity and knowledge in the sector. Consequently, MCST continues to strengthen relationships with entities of substantial heritage within the sector. One of the most notable collaborations is in fact with CNES. Such a collaboration, which has been formalised through a Framework Agreement signed in 2017, enables the exchange of personnel and partnership on space-related

research projects, particularly those related to Earth Observation data processing and small-scale technology development.

In 2018, MCST issued an Expressing of Interest (EOI) to all Maltese stakeholders interested in collaborating with their French counterparts; a collaboration that will be enabled through the respective bilateral agreements. The EOI entitled “Bilateral Cooperation with Foreign Space Entities” [<http://mcst.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Space-Bilaterals-EOI.docx>] which was open until the 14th January 2019, was an important prerequisite to develop an effective collaboration. The EOI enabled MCST to access CNES’s expertise in the evaluation and down-selection of preliminary ideas, but also for applicants to directly discuss their ambitions with CNES experts to ensure that their local development and research needs can be catered for by CNES and its network. The competitive Call outlined in this document, is thus only open to applicants that had responded to the EOI, specifying interest in collaborating with CNES and having been selected by CNES to discuss their needs and invited to submit a proposal under this Call.

2 The MCST-CNES Space Bilateral Fund

2.1 Objectives of this Fund

The *MCST-CNES Space Bilateral Fund* shall provide financial support for space-related research projects in collaboration with CNES. This is a concrete capacity building measure within the Maltese space-sector with the prime objective of achieving a critical mass of knowledge within the sector.

The expected impacts of the programme, amongst others are as follows:

- Advancement of local capacity-building that is enabled through research and associated educational activities with expert entities
- Enable Maltese beneficiaries to initiate a track-record within space-related research and hence position Maltese entities to better benefit from competitive space-related calls such as those within EU framework programmes, amongst others
- Creation of a critical mass of knowledge in the sector and hence a research platform for the attraction of subsequent local and foreign talent
- Dissemination and popularisation of the space sector through awareness raising initiatives of the research being conducted within the programme

2.2 Projects Scope and Thematic Areas

MCST would like to receive proposals for collaborative research/activities with CNES, or with other related institutions nominated by CNES, on the following thematic areas:

Type A – Space Research and Technology

- small-scale space technology development, including but not limited to small satellite development;
- testing and validation phases of research on small-scale technologies/hardware;
- Space Situational Awareness (SSA) and Space Surveillance Tracking (SST);

Type B – Cooperative Activities

- training of experts and specialists, including students and researchers;
- holding of joint seminars, workshops and symposiums;
- promotion of space activities, in particular amongst young people;
- development of joint research proposals for applications to the European Framework Programmes or other appropriate programmes;

3 Definitions

Activities are the tasks which were undertaken and where applicable funded through the MCST-CNES Space Bilateral Fund.

Applicant means anyone eligible for participation in a Project in terms of these Rules for Participation and who consequently applies for funding under this scheme.

Consortium means a group of two or more Partners. One of the partners would be the Lead Partner.

Council refers to the Malta Council for Science and Technology

Due Diligence is an investigation of a business or person prior to signing the Grant Agreement.

Evaluators are the consultants who responded to the Council's Call for Applications to provide evaluation services for submissions made through this Programme.

Knowledge Transfer is defined as the transfer of technology or know-how between public entities, and the commercial sector for development into useful products and services. This should result in licensing or marketing agreements, spin-offs, co-development arrangements, training or the exchange of personnel.

Lead Partner means the Maltese Consortium Partner identified as being the partner responsible to ensure the correct execution of the MCST-CNES Space Bilateral Fund Project Grant Agreement and will have joint and several liabilities together with other Project Partners for all the obligations arising from the Grant Agreement. The Project Coordinator shall be an employee of the Lead Partner.

Maltese Legal Entity means any entity created under the law of Malta which has legal personality and which may, acting under its own name, exercise rights and be subject to obligations.

Private Entity or Private Body means any Maltese Legal Entity which has more than 50% private shareholding.

Partner means any Maltese Legal Entity, as described above that forms part of a Consortium for the purposes of applying for funding under this Programme.

Project Coordinator is the individual with experience in research project management who will assume the responsibilities defined within this document. The Project Coordinator shall be

an employee of the Lead Partner of the Consortium carrying out the MCST-CNES Space Bilateral Fund project.

Project Grant means the granted funding provided.

Project Value means the entire project budget including any co-financing.

Public Entity means any Maltese Public Service Department or Maltese Public Sector Entity, or any Maltese Legal Entity which has more than 50% government shareholding.

Public Service refers to all Ministries and Departments; and (ii) Public Sector Entities refers to authorities, corporations, agencies and commercial public-sector entities in which the Government has a majority shareholding and that are not listed on the stock exchange. Public Entities also include foundations, local councils and public academic entities. In the case of public academic entities, this includes but is not limited to a higher education entity or a research institute, whether as a whole body or as a component unit or department within such body, provided that the entity's ongoing education and research is scientifically in line with the subject of the application being submitted during this call and the relevant smart specialisation areas and provided that the higher education entity must be in possession of a license for Higher Education according to the Further and Higher Education (Licensing, Accreditation and Quality Assurance) Regulations – Subsidiary Legislation 327.433. This does not include the license for a tuition centre.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) is an undertaking which fulfils the criteria laid down in Annex I of Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty.

Start-up Undertaking shall be defined as an enterprise that has been established for less than five (5) years following its registration. For eligible undertakings that are not subject to registration, the five-year eligibility period may be considered to start from the moment when the enterprise either starts its economic activity or is liable to tax for its economic activity.

Start Date means the date which is stated in the grant agreement for the official start of the project. Month 1 is the month of the start date.

4 Eligibility Criteria

This section provides details on applicant eligibility and fit within this Programme.

4.1 Eligibility for Participation

Any Maltese entity, or consortia of such, which has the intention of being a beneficiary in a project funded through this scheme is eligible for funding subject to the terms and conditions laid out in this document.

- i. The call is only open to applicants that had responded to the Council's Expression of Interest (EOI) entitled "Bilateral Cooperation with Foreign Space Entities" [<http://mcst.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Space-Bilaterals-EOI.docx>] and had clearly indicated their interest in collaborating with CNES. This specific EOI was open was open to all Maltese legal entities, or consortia of such, until the 14th January 2019.

The EOI enabled MCST to access CNES's expertise in the evaluation and down-selection of preliminary ideas, but also for applicants to directly discuss their ambitions with CNES experts to ensure that their local development and research needs can be catered for by CNES and its network. The competitive Call outlined in this document, is thus only open to applicants that had responded to the EOI, specifying interest in collaborating with CNES and having been selected by CNES to discuss their needs and invited to submit a proposal under this Call.

- ii. Any applicants that at the time of proposal submission will have been deemed by the Council to be non-compliant with the terms and conditions of any previous or then current Grant Agreement including but not limited to applicants who at the time of proposal submission are the beneficiaries of another Council funded project that is out of the Grant Agreement timelines, shall automatically be disqualified from participation in this Call.
- iii. In addition, the Council reserves the right at its discretion to request a Bank Guarantee to address its concerns with regards to potential risks identified by the Council as being posed by any one or more applicants.
- iv. Should a Consortium of Maltese entities be proposed at application stage, one of the Partners should be designated as the Lead Partner and will be responsible for the application, the appointment of a project coordinator and the correct execution of the project. Each consortium partner is to keep a separate project-bank account or records,

clearly distinguishable from its other accounting records. All relevant grant payments by the Council and project expenses must be recorded in these accounts. Eligible expenses must have been determined in accordance with the usual accounting and management principles and practices of the Partner.

4.2 Pre-requisites

- i. The project application form, which is to be devised on the template appended to this call, is to be based on the content of the above-mentioned EOI response. When drafting the application, researchers are to consider any preliminary discussions they have had with CNES (or associated entities) and coordinated by MCST as part of the EOI process when drafting the application.
- ii. The project deliverables should have a completion timeframe of preferably not more than 12 months and shall include all the requirements as specified in the End of Project Technical and Financial Report Template.
- iii. Applicants must, at the time of application be a Maltese Legal Entity having sufficient capacity with respect to suitable qualified human resources (in addition to those that shall be recruited for the project), appropriate technology acumen and financial standing to undertake such a project. Confirmation in this regard is to be provided, possibly by referencing to the primary aims and fields of activity of the applicant and past or ongoing project experiences as well as by including CVs of key personnel. The Council reserves the right to request further documentation and any other assurances, from the applicant prior to the consideration and evaluation of the proposal.
- iv. Applicants shall have a good financial standing having passed the Due Diligence administrative check by MCST evaluators.

4.3 Funding limitations

- i. Funding associated with this Call is made available primarily for educational purposes and funding shall be limited to activities of a non-economic character. Details as related to such activities are available within European Commission communication document C(2014) 3282 entitled “Framework for the state aid of research and development and innovation” which is accessible through

http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/modernisation/rdi_framework_en.pdf

- ii. Funding shall only cover costs that are reasonably necessary for the implementation of the chosen project and, included in the proposed budget for the project which must be authorised. The grant shall cover eligible costs of the project, as specified in section 6 of this document, capped to a maximum of €50,000.
- iii. Funding will not be awarded retrospectively for already-completed projects and activities, or for activities that have already acquired funding through other funding sources. Funding is only available for research that has not been previously conducted.

4.4 Double Funding

Funding under this Programme is made available on the basis that none of the project beneficiaries have benefited and will not benefit from any other grant, fiscal/tax incentives or financial incentive of whatever nature, applied for and/or utilised for the same scope as that subject of the funding requested under this Programme. Provided that, in the case where the application covers work that is part of a larger project, the beneficiary must submit a table as an appendix to the application form that shows a comprehensive list of the items of work and the source of funding for each item.

By signing the Grant Agreement, project partners are automatically accepting and authorising the Council to exchange essential information related to the project with other funding agencies, both local and overseas, for any necessary checks. Any occurrence of double funding should be communicated in writing to the Unit Director prior to the signing of the Grant Agreement.

5 Programme Parameters

The Council reserves the right to carry out financial and technical audits at any time throughout the project to ensure that all programme parameters are being observed as per contractual obligations.

5.1 Project Start Date and Duration

The project must start within four (4) weeks of Grant Agreement signature, or as otherwise stated by the Council and preferably have a duration of not more than **twelve (12) months**.

Month 1 is the month in which the project starts. Timelines should be aligned to the preliminary discussions held with CNES by the applicant.

5.2 Project Grant

Total financial contribution over the lifetime of the project shall not exceed the funding limit as established in the Grant Agreement, irrespective of actual expenditure. The financial contribution to a Partner which falls under the definition of Maltese Legal Entity shall be **100% of eligible costs** incurred by that Partner **up to a maximum of €50,000**. If the beneficiary is a consortium of Maltese entities, the amount of funds stated are for the whole project across the consortium. Details on eligible costs are provided in section 6.

The periodic funding will be allocated according to the following schedule:

- At the beginning of the project, the Council will **pre-finance 80%** of the project grant to the lead beneficiary. This will include both direct and indirect eligible costs.
- A **20% retention** of the project grant shall be withheld by the Council and only released upon successful completion of the project and approval of all associated deliverables.

In the case of overpayment, the beneficiary will be required to refund the under-spent amount to the Council within a specific timeframe, or as agreed to with the Council.

5.3 Deliverables

5.3.1 Project-related reporting

Beneficiaries are to report on project progress as per the list hereunder. All reports are to include sufficient evidence on the achievement of the project objectives as well as the parameters indicated in the application and should be provided in accordance with the templates presented to the beneficiary by the Council. The following reporting is mandatory:

Project Progress Report, to be submitted mid-way through the project i.e. by Month 6.

- An account of project activity, achievements and deliverables over the past 6 months compared to the originally submitted application;

- An account of actual expenditure over the past months compared with the originally submitted budgeted expenditure. All financial reports must be signed by the person responsible for the financial management of the Partner, and assembled as per the instructions in the Grant Agreement;
- An updated forecast of project activity and projected achievements for the next 6 months;
- An updated forecast of projected expenditure for the next 6 months.

End of Project Technical Report, to be submitted by project end date. In the case of a consortium, any activity details must be broken down for each Project Partner. This report shall be prepared in accordance with the appropriate template provided with the Grant Agreement.

End of Project Financial Audited Report, to be submitted within one (1) month of the project end date as per the Grant Agreement. In the case of a consortium, any activity details must be broken down for each Project Partner. The Final Financial Report needs to be audited by certified auditors appointed by each of the partners where each auditor is responsible for the financial audit of the relevant partner and approved by the Council once submitted. The report shall cover the whole project, thus covering the work and expenditure. The audit should determine the total eligible costs and compare these to funds forwarded to the Partners.

5.3.2 Other Deliverables

- A minimum of two interim meetings to verbally update the Council on progress. Such meetings shall be reasonably spread throughout project duration.
- During project duration, publish at least two articles in local newspapers or magazines with significant public outreach. This should raise awareness about the project and its benefits. All publications should be approved by the Council before publication and should include mention of the Council as per the guidelines in section 10. A copy of the publication is to be presented to the Council within two weeks of publication.
- On project completion, or as directed by the Council, support space-related outreach events held in Malta. The beneficiary shall always cooperate with the Council in the promotion of the funding programme and related sector by delivering presentations about the Project or through other reasonable means at the request of the Council.

6 Eligible and Ineligible Costs

Any costs mentioned within this section relate to the Maltese-participation within the collaboration.

6.1 Eligible Costs

All eligible expenses must be incurred between the Start Date and the End Date of the Project and must be limited to the budgeted value. The following subsections detail eligible direct costs.

a) Personnel Costs

The rules of personnel cost reimbursements differentiate between existing employees, referred to as *existing personnel*, and employees that have been employed **specifically** for the project, referred to *new personnel*.

Existing Personnel

- Personnel costs related to project management shall not exceed 10% of the project value. It is expected that such project management is done by the lead partner.

New Personnel

- Students can be engaged on the project and paid an annual stipend of €6,000 when reading for a Master's degree or an annual stipend of €8,000 when reading for a Doctoral degree.

The *hourly rate* for existing and new personnel is calculated as follows:

$$\text{hourly rate} = \frac{(\text{basic salary} + \text{allowances})}{\text{yearly weekday hours}}$$

While the personnel limits per project are pinned according to the below table, the salary rates (including National Insurance and Inland Revenue employer contributions and allowances) are to be considered as indicative guidelines:

Role in Project	Hourly rates (Guidelines)	Limits per project (not flexible)
Top Management or equivalent	From € 30.57 to € 37.63	Max 2 per project
Middle Management, or equivalent	From € 21.74 to € 30.56	Max 2 per project
Senior Researcher ¹ or equivalent	From € 21.74 to € 30.56	No Limits
Researcher ² or equivalent	From €12.06 to € 21.73	No Limits
Operational, technician, research support assistant or equivalent	Up to €12.05	No Limits

The rates stated in the table above are for the year 2019. For subsequent years a 5% increase per year is recommended. Kindly ensure that only hourly rates are provided in the application form.

The Council recognises that in niche areas of research there may be a need to exceed the above-mentioned remuneration guidelines. Salary brackets that are higher than those noted above are permissible, however, together with the CVs of the said personnel will be subject to the scientific evaluation by the evaluation board. In any case the salary rates claimed in the proposal shall match the rates in the employee contracts.

Filled consolidated time sheets are to be retained for all personnel, including students, as proof of number of hours spent on the project. Documentation of the utilisation of the employees' internally funded research quota for other research activities is to be retained as this evidence will be required by the auditors.

b) Service costs

Service costs are costs associated with project activities that are carried out by CNES or any associated entities. Such costs include, but are not limited to, consultancy and infrastructure costs covered by the MCST-CNES framework agreement.

¹ The term 'senior researcher' is to be used for a postdoctoral researcher with a specialist and high level of local and international experience in the field. Individuals possessing a high level of experience in industry can still be considered. The applicant is to confirm this judgement with MCST well in advance of submitting the application form.

² The term 'researcher' is to be used for a Bachelor's, Master's or a Ph.D. degree holder and hence the hourly rate should be equivalent to the degree held by the relevant individual.

c) Training Costs

These are costs associated with the provision of training to Maltese beneficiary personnel by CNES or any associated entities. Such costs include, but are not limited to tutorship, mentorship and job shadowing.

d) Specialised equipment and software

Purchase of specialised equipment, including software and datasets required for achieving the objectives of the project. Details on eligible indirect costs associated with overheads related to such specialized equipment are detailed in part (h).

Note: Considering the spirit of this call (i.e. a focus on human resource capacity building) it is expected that equipment/software costs, if any, constitute only a small fraction of the overall project budget.

e) Travel Costs

Total travel costs within a project shall be **up to a limit of 25%** of the grant value. Travel costs are eligible if strictly related to the execution of the project. Such travel costs should be included only for senior or key personnel individuals from within the applicant's organization or supporting organisations.

The budget justification should include the destination, number of people travelling and dates or duration of your stay for all anticipated travel. Travel shall be considered eligible if it is the most financially advantageous means of travel, utilizing standard commercial transport in the economy class. Details on eligible indirect costs associated with overheads related to such travel costs are detailed in part (h). The entity must ensure that economical means of travel are sought and that travel costs are in line with the applicant entity's procedures.

f) Scientific information

Access to scientific information sources including databases and publications. Details on eligible indirect costs associated with overheads related to the access of scientific information are detailed in part (h).

g) Consumables

Overall value of consumables typically cannot exceed 5% of project grant. Proposals with consumables exceeding 5% of the project grant need to be discussed at application stage.

Details on eligible indirect costs associated with overheads related to such consumables are detailed in part (h).

h) Overheads

Overheads will be covered at 10% of direct eligible costs, excluding the costs of

- subcontracting
- single items of equipment, software and other capital purchases above €5000 (therefore a capping of €500 per item is enforced)

6.2 Additional Provisions

Eligible Costs are to conform with the following, and are subject to the final audit scrutiny:

- Any expenses incurred during the project must be consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- In the event of purchases over €250, the Council obliges all partners to demonstrate adequate market testing, obtaining three quotations from three different, independent, and relevant sources. In the case of payments to CNES or its delegated/associated entities, MCST does not mandate such procedures due to the nature of the collaborative partnership and the fact that such charges would not be at normal commercial rates.
- Partners are to follow the procurement regulations of their entity.
- Any calls for the recruitment of staff on a project is to be conducted in a strictly transparent manner, and is to include a public call and interview process. Proof of publication is to be provided to the Council.
- Commercial transactions between consortium partners, or between a consortium partner and a company with similar shareholding to a consortium partner, is not allowed.

6.3 Ineligible Costs

The following expenditure shall be considered as ineligible costs:

- Expenses related to loans, interest, etc
- Recoverable value added tax
- Expenses which are recoverable through other funding mechanisms
- Re-purchase of equipment originally procured through other funding mechanisms
- Purchase of equipment from partners or their subsidiaries within the consortium

- Opportunity costs related to foregone production and production downtime arising from the allocation of resources to the Project
- Any activity related to the reproduction of a commercial product or process by a physical examination of an existing system or from plans, blueprints, detailed specifications or publicly available information.
- Standard office equipment/ stationery
- Personnel hours for travelling

7 The Application Process

Considering that projects funded under this grant as strictly pertaining to non-economic activities, applicants are to be guided by the application template to provide considerable justification on the non-economic character of the proposed research. Details as related to such activities are available within European Commission communication document C(2014) 3282 entitled “Framework for the state aid of research and development and innovation” which is accessible through http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/modernisation/rdi_framework_en.pdf

When the call is open, all relevant dates and documentation shall be published on the Council’s website (<http://mcst.gov.mt>).

7.1 Application Submission

The project application must present a coherent, comprehensive and credible plan based on the templates provided by the Council. Reasonable estimates of human resources, finance, deliverables and timeframes are required by said application. Applicants are to consider any preliminary discussions they have had with CNES (or associated entities) and coordinated by MCST as part of the EOI process when drafting the application.

All submissions shall include:

- The application form in Microsoft Word (.docx) format using the appropriate template, and a signed scanned copy of the application form (.pdf).
- Curricula Vitae of key personnel including relevant track records. These should clearly establish that the entity/consortium has the potential to carry out the project.
- Where applicable, the pre-agreed deviation Annex as detailed in Section 7.3
- Memorandum & Articles of Association of all Maltese partners (excluding public entities).



- Audited financial statements for last 3 fiscal years of all partners excluding public entities. (If the applicant or partner is a start-up and the above documents are not available, the Partner shall provide the financial projections for three (3) years signed by an independent certified public accountant, including:
 - an income statement,
 - a cash flow statement, and
 - a statement of financial position)

The Application Form must be dated, signed and initialised (stamped or signed) on each page by the applicant or in the case of a consortium by the Lead Partner’s legal representative. Additionally, the legal representative of each participating organisation within the consortium must sign on the application and enter the date of signature in blue ink (not electronically).

Application Forms can either be sent electronically to space.mcst@gov.mt with “MCST-CNES Bilateral Fund 2019 Application” as the subject line. It should be noted that emails larger than 6MB will be automatically rejected by the system and applicants are encouraged to make use of cloud storage if required. Alternatively, applications may be submitted by hand to:

*Mr. Stephen Grixti
Senior Executive, Space Initiatives
Malta Council for Science and Technology
Villa Bighi, Kalkara KKR 1320*

In both cases, it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that a confirmation of receipt is provided.

7.2 Considerations at application stage

The applicant should ensure complete compliance to these ‘Rules for Participation 2019 v1.0’ prior to submission as no amendment or negotiations are allowed after submission and any unapproved deviations will result in the failure of the application during the administrative check. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Any text or appendices within the submitted application, that go beyond any prescribed maximum word count and/or page limits, shall be disregarded in the evaluation process.

The data collected by the Council via the application for the aid and its subsequent processing by the Council to evaluate data subject's request for a grant under this scheme is in line with:

- i. These rules for participation;
- ii. The legitimate basis to process personal data submitted by the data subject by virtue of his/her written application for aid is Regulation 6 (1)(b) of the General Data Protection Regulation ("GDPR"), as 'processing is necessary in order to take steps at the request of the data subject prior to entering into a contract'.

7.3 Deviations

Whenever an applicant deems that there is reasonable justification to deviate in a non-substantial manner from the procedures detailed herein, the applicant must submit a specific request for deviation, with reasons justifying such request to the Council *at least fifteen (15) days prior* to the submission of the application. Acceptance or otherwise of such request shall be at the sole and unfettered discretion of the Council. In any event in which the Council accepts such request, the applicant should complete Appendix 2 in the application form entitled "pre-agreed deviations to deliverables".

Applicants should note that:

- Transfers of project funds between line items and within project timelines that are below 20% of the total grant, are automatically allowed and do not require prior approval by the Council. A clear indication of such transfers needs to be illustrated in the relevant reports. All reallocations are to be appropriate and within the scope of the project and its deliverables.
- Transfer of project funds between line items and within project timelines that exceed 20% of the total grant, will be considered by the Council upon an email request by the coordinator to the Council.

8 Evaluation

Project applications will be evaluated through a three-step process:

- Administrative compliance: Firstly, proposals are checked for compliance with the guidelines detailed in Section 7. Projects that are administratively compliant shall pass to the next step.

- **Content Evaluation:** The evaluation board, composed of CNES and MCST-nominated experts, shall evaluate the content of project proposals
- **Due Diligence:** This step involves an investigation of the applicant entities prior the signing the Grant Agreement.

Within the content evaluation, submission shall be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Alignment to the scope of MCST-CNES collaboration
- Scientific relevance and alignment to thematic areas of the call
- Competence and expertise and/or potential of the local team/s
- Quality and practicality of project implementation
- Benefits for both the Maltese and CNES participants and how the synergy brings added value
- Extent to which project-enabled learning opportunities are being maximised for the benefit of local researchers – and the associated capacity building through the engagement of new staff, and/or students
- Quality of dissemination, such as through scientific publications, media publications or other communication channels promoting the sector
- Post project prospects, such as the leveraging by other Maltese entities of opportunities arising from the collaboration
- Effective use of budgets and resources

9 Post Selection Process

9.1 The Grant Agreement

Following evaluation of the application, successful applicants will be invited to sign a Grant Agreement establishing the terms and conditions governing the financing of the project. The project application, including but not limited to milestones, compliance and reporting obligations, shall constitute an integral part of the Grant Agreement.

Hard copies of the Grant Agreement must be signed by all beneficiaries within one (1) week from the date on which the applicant receives them. In the case of a consortium, the coordinator should ensure that all members of the consortium are available to provide their signature during this 1-week timeframe. Failure to comply with the stipulated timeframe will result in a withdrawal of the offer for funding.

In addition to the signed copies of the Grant Agreement, the beneficiary or Project Coordinator must provide two (2) images related to the project and an abstract on the project. These will be used to publicise the award. MCST reserves the right to publish such abstracts without prior approval, but will work with beneficiaries for any further publication material.

9.2 Start Date and End Date

The project will start on a pre-determined date as agreed by all the respective parties and determined in the Grant Agreement, which date shall be within four (4) weeks after the date of signature of this agreement by the Executive Chairman of the Malta Council for Science and Technology, hereinafter referred to as the “Agreement Date”.

As described in the Grant Agreement, the Council will endeavour to transfer the first tranche of funding to the beneficiary’s project account as soon as possible after the Agreement Date. The beneficiary should ensure that, between the Agreement Date and the Start Date, all activities required for a smooth project start are completed. These may include but are not limited to:

- obtaining quotations for procurement purposes
- issuing human resource calls
- opening a bank account for the depositing of the first tranche of funds

10 Dissemination and Externalisation

10.1 Dissemination and externalisation plan

The mandatory deliverables involving dissemination can be found in Section 5.3. In addition to such deliverables, a dissemination and externalisation plan is recommended to be submitted together with the application form. Alternatively, the project can demonstrate its dissemination and externalisation plan through a dedicated work package.

10.2 Referencing

Any articles or publications related to the project should include the words:

‘Project <Project Name> financed by the Malta Council for Science & Technology, for and on behalf of the Foundation for Science and Technology, through the MCST-CNES Space Bilateral Fund’.

Any websites or printed material related to the project should also include the Council logo, the Ministry logo or any other logo related to this Programme as provided by the Council. Such material should follow the specifications described in the Council’s guidelines.

During the Term of Agreement and for five (5) years thereafter, the beneficiary shall include and prominently feature the Council and this Programme in any publicity related to the project, as per the Council’s guidelines.

All publications should be approved by the Council before publication and should include mention of the Council as per the above guidelines. In the case where printed material is published without a mention of the *MCST-CNES Space Bilateral Fund* and the Council, the beneficiary shall be obliged to publish a correction at its own expense in the subsequent issue of the publication. This is also applicable for published material produced by persons who are not members of the consortium. In the case where such publicity does not mention the *MCST-CNES Space Bilateral Fund* and the Council, associated costs will be considered ineligible.

11 Auditing

Over and above the audit responsibilities of the beneficiary or, in the case of a consortium, the lead partner, following the completion of the project the Council may conduct a detailed audit consisting of a financial and a technical part. Whenever conducted, the three-part audit will consist of the following:

The financial audit

- Accounts
- Physical Inventory
- Time-sheets and payslips
- Receipts for all equipment and consumables
- Bank statements for the *MCST-CNES Space Bilateral Fund* Project Account

The Project Management Audit

- Schedule management
- Change management
- Deliverables
- Achievements compared with Key Performance Indicators

Technical Audit

- Summary of the project including scientific hypothesis investigated
- Interpretation of Research Results
- Project's impact

The Council reserves the right to request additional project-related information and conduct intermediate audits at any time. If a project is found to be in breach of the Grant Agreement or to materially depart from the submitted application, the Council reserves the right to discontinue the award and the Partners may be required to refund the Grant in part or in full. In any such event, the Council may also exclude an applicant from participating in future calls of the Programme.

12 Supervening Circumstances

Any changes to the project objectives, work-packages or any other parameter committed in the application are to be communicated in writing to Mr. Stephen Grixti, at least two (2) months prior to the deadline. A clear justification in writing should be provided. The Council will acknowledge receipt of the request within five (5) working days and reply in a timely manner so as not to affect project performance. Acceptance or otherwise of any changes is the sole discretion of the Council and its decision is binding and final. Any other communication is not considered valid or binding.

The Project Coordinator is obliged to immediately advise the Unit Director, of any internal or extraneous significant event which might affect the validity or implementation of the project. This obligation applies to the entire period between the submission of the project application and the completion of the project. The Council shall acknowledge receipt within five (5) working days. The reply will either give such directives as it deems necessary for the furtherance on the project or re-assess the project in its entirety accordingly.

Failure on the part of the project coordinator to respect this obligation may be deemed by the Council to constitute material non-compliance on the part of the Beneficiary and the Council may thereafter take such action as is necessary in terms of the Grant Agreement in consequence of such non-compliance.

12.1 Project Extension

Project extension requests are to be submitted in writing to the Council by not later than two (2) months before the original project end date. Such extensions will be granted at the sole and unfettered discretion of the Council in consultation with CNES.

12.2 Default

If the implementation of a project becomes impossible or if the beneficiary fails to implement it, the Council shall be entitled to take any action it deems necessary, including, but not limited to, the withdrawal of funding for the project and the collection of refunds of money already paid out. A similar course of action may be followed if a project is in default as a result of not meeting one or more of its obligations.

13 Interpretation of Rules

This document endeavours to establish comprehensive and unambiguous rules governing participation in the MCST-CNES Space Bilateral Fund. However, should circumstances arise where the rules are inadequate, unclear, and ambiguous or conflicting, the Council shall exercise its discretion in the interpretation of the rules or will extrapolate the rules as necessary through the setting up of ad hoc committees.

14 Contacts

For any enquiries kindly contact:

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