

Space Research Fund

Building capacity in the downstream Earth Observation sector

A programme supported by the European Space Agency



Rules for Participation 2020 – *State Aid Not Applicable* Funding Modality
Version 1.0



Contents

1	Introduction.....	4
2	The Space Research Fund	5
2.2	<i>Objectives of this Fund.....</i>	5
2.3	<i>Projects Scope and Thematic Areas.....</i>	6
2.4	<i>Research Streams.....</i>	7
2.5	<i>Contacts</i>	8
3	Definitions	9
4	Eligibility Criteria.....	11
4.2	<i>Eligibility for Participation</i>	11
4.3	<i>Pre-requisites</i>	12
4.4	<i>Funding limitations</i>	13
4.5	<i>Double Funding.....</i>	13
4.6	<i>Other terms and conditions</i>	14
5	Consortium	15
5.2	<i>Lead Partner and Project Coordinator</i>	15
5.3	<i>Conflict with Fundamental Aims of the Fund.....</i>	16
6	Programme Parameters.....	17
6.2	<i>Project Start Date and Duration</i>	17
6.3	<i>Project Grant</i>	17
6.4	<i>Deliverables.....</i>	18
6.4.1	Mandatory Deliverables	18
6.4.2	Recommended Deliverables	19
7	Eligible and Ineligible Costs.....	20
7.2	<i>Funding Distribution between Partners</i>	20
7.3	<i>Ineligible Costs</i>	21
8	The Application Process	22
8.2	<i>Application Submission</i>	22
8.3	<i>Considerations at Application Stage</i>	23
8.3.1	Respecting Lead Times	23
8.3.2	Assistance with Applications	24
8.3.3	Confidentiality of Submissions	24
8.4	<i>Deviations.....</i>	24
9	Evaluation	25
9.2	<i>Content Evaluation Criteria</i>	27
10	Post Selection Process.....	31
10.2	<i>The Grant Agreement.....</i>	31
10.3	<i>Start Date and End Date</i>	31
11	Funding, Management and Progress Monitoring	32
11.2	<i>Allocation and Disbursement of Funding</i>	32
11.3	<i>Progress Report</i>	33
11.4	<i>End of Project Technical Report</i>	33



11.5	<i>End of Project Final Financial Report and Audit Report</i>	33
11.6	<i>Detailed Audit</i>	34
11.7	<i>Subcontracting</i>	35
11.8	<i>Accountability</i>	36
12	Dissemination and Externalisation	36
12.2	<i>Dissemination and externalisation plan</i>	36
12.3	<i>Referencing</i>	36
13	Supervening Circumstances	37
13.2	<i>Project Extension</i>	37
13.3	<i>Default</i>	37
13.4	<i>Partner Withdrawal</i>	38
14	Interpretation of Rules	38
Annex A		39
A.1	<i>Details on Eligible costs</i>	40
A.1.1	Eligible Costs	40
a)	Personnel Costs	40
b)	Specialised equipment	42
c)	<i>Travel Costs</i>	42
d)	Scientific information	43
e)	Consumables	43
f)	Subcontracted Activities	43
g)	Overheads	43
A.1.2	Additional Provisions	44
A.1.3	Aid Intensity	44

1 Introduction

The term ‘space’ is often perceived as abstract. Very often, the layman associates the term with sky observation, lunar missions, rocket launches and related cutting-edge technologies. While all this is indeed a substantial part of the space sector, the term encompasses so much more. Space-related technologies have nowadays permeated into our everyday lives with a myriad of applications in varied thematic areas. Apart from the more commonly known uses of space technology, such as satellite navigation applications and satellite communications, satellite Earth observation imagery is increasingly becoming an asset to better manage and approach societal challenges in a variety of application areas.

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 awareness-raising. This is an important first step that helps broaden the mindset about space technologies: most of which are no longer a luxury but are at the core of various essential commodities in the modern world. The focus has been on space application technologies, in particular satellite Earth Observation (EO), since Malta already possesses a strong ICT sector with highly transferrable skills to EO data processing.

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. This is particularly important since the local sector is somewhat considered at its inception stage. It is well recognised that Training, collaborative and funding opportunities for research and innovation 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 European Union funds and markets on satellite data and the eventual provision of new products and services.

Amongst other initiatives, the Malta Council for Science and Technology has worked to establish a Space Research Fund that provides financial support for research, development and innovation within the area of Satellite Earth Observation. This new funding programme, which is supported through the technical expertise of the European Space Agency through a formalised Implementation Arrangement, is indeed a modest start to capacity building within the sector.

2 The Space Research Fund

2.2 Objectives of this Fund

The potential of EO data, including free and open datasets made available through Copernicus, the EU Earth Observation programme, can only be fully exploited by value-adding downstream services, which are tailor made to specific public and commercial needs. Such solutions, often encompassing research and development at the intersection of science and ICT, translate the unprocessed and raw data delivered from EO satellites and other in-situ sensors into information that is usable by the end user.

This Space Research Fund shall provide financial support for research, development and innovation in the downstream Satellite EO sector, specifically projects that deal with the processing and exploitation of data collected through EO satellites. This is a concrete capacity building measure within the Maltese downstream Satellite EO sector within the prime objective of achieving a critical mass of knowledge within the sector. Grants shall be awarded on the basis of yearly competitive calls for 20-month projects. Additional details on the scope and thematic areas of project funded through this programme is provided in Section 2.3.

The expected Impacts of the Programme, amongst others are as follows:

- Advancement of capacity-building in the sector leading to innovation within the programme, as well as a platform for post-programme innovation
- Enable Maltese beneficiaries to initiate a track-record within EO space 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 an EO research platform for the attraction of subsequent foreign direct investment
- Spin-off of new ventures/companies from academia and/or operational technology transfer to industry, together with growth of opportunities for start-ups and SMEs within the sector and encouragement for diversification
- Eventual employment opportunities within the sector
- Provision of smarter solutions for the public sector through more efficient and less ambiguous services
- Dissemination and popularisation of the space sector through awareness raising initiatives of the research being conducted within the programme

2.3 Projects Scope and Thematic Areas

Scope of project proposals funded under this call:

- Utilization and exploitation of existing European Union EO infrastructures, in particular the Copernicus Programme, and avoidance of duplication (unless a specific local need requires local installations)
- Leveraging Malta's geographic location, topography and demography with relevance to EO test bed opportunities
- Ensuring international relevance of research to reduce competitiveness and capability barriers for Maltese entities to acquire European-projects and clients
- Exhibiting potential to leverage further funding through other streams to complement the programme size
- Development of technologies that are close to market or market-deployable
- Demonstration of the potential benefits of the proposals, converging academic research with industrial application of the technologies.

Project proposal thematic areas across the programme may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Themes aligned to the local Smart Specialisation Strategy, such as: Resource Efficient Buildings, Aquaculture, Maritime Services, Tourism Product Development, ICT as an innovation, Health and Aviation & Aerospace
- Maritime surveillance beyond current EU programmes and services
- Tackling migration challenges beyond current EU programmes and services
- The Blue Economy and the related conservation and sustainable use of the seas
- Urban Area Management and related sustainable development
- Supporting Smart Cities development and tackling related challenges
- Improve spatial resolution challenges of current Earth Observation Satellite systems
- Atmosphere-related research

It is to be noted that the above list is non-exhaustive, and project proposals not aligned to the above thematic areas, but proposing solutions to important alternative challenges may be acceptable. The mentioned thematic areas are applicable to the overall programme and applicants should review the Call advert to be informed of the specificities and thematic areas for each Call.

2.4 Research Streams

Considering the early stage of the local space sector, the Space Research Fund shall offer funding opportunities across the innovation chain, from early conceptual research to the development of technologies that are closer to market. This provides opportunities for innovation within the academic and research sectors while encouraging spin-offs and the diversification of start-up and SME portfolios. Moreover, this shall strengthen the nexus between academia and industry leading to operational technology transfer in a more structured and sustainable manner.

Consequently, the Space Research Fund accepts proposals under two different streams:

- Stream 1: Technology Concept Research (TRL 1 to 4)
- Stream 2: Applied Technology Development (TRL 5+)

Technology Readiness Level (TRL) definitions as relevant to this programme are defined in Table 2. While the rules for participation detailed in this document are applicable to both streams, applicants are to consider the guidelines in Table 1 when choosing their stream in the application form. Such guidelines will be considered during evaluation as detailed in Section 9. The highest scoring proposals across both streams will be selected for funding. The number of projects selected for funding will correspond to the funds available under the programme.

	Stream 1 Technology Concept Research (TRL 1 to 4)	Stream 2 Applied Technology Development (TRL 5+)
Beneficiary*	It is recommended that the beneficiary or consortium includes at least one research or knowledge dissemination organisation .	The beneficiary or consortium preferably includes an end user of the technology under development. Furthermore, it is recommended that the beneficiary or consortium includes at least one industrial entity .
Research Prospects and Impacts	Prospects of the proposal have a medium importance . It is recommended that the proposal makes reference to an eventual case study or end-user of the research being proposed.	Prospects of the proposal have a high importance under this stream. A credible route to commercialisation which promises a saleable product rooted in the needs of the end user is important.

*As detailed in Section 5, a beneficiary can be either a sole participant or a consortium of partners.

Table 1: Stream guidelines

Space Research Fund Stream	TRL	Applications and Services
Stream 2 Applied Technology Development	9	Application/service operationally deployed and used by paying customers
	8	Application/service completed and validated, commercial offer ready
	7	Trials with customers/users to validate utilisation and business models
	6	Demonstration of prototype in relevant environment, price policy identified
	5	Application/service verified using operational elements, customers/users not involved
Stream 1 Technology Concept Research	4	Application/service verification in laboratory environment, market segment(s) and customers/users identified
	3	Concept analysis performed and target market identified
	2	Application/service concept formulated, market opportunities not yet addressed
	1	Scientific Research

Table 2: TRL definitions (ESA)

2.5 Contacts

For any enquiries kindly contact:

Stephen Grixti
Senior Executive, Space Initiatives
The Malta Council for Science & Technology
Email: stephen.a.grixti@gov.mt
Tel: +356 2360 2154

3 Definitions

Activities are the tasks which were undertaken and where applicable funded through this Space Research Fund scheme.

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 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.

4.2 Eligibility for Participation

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

- i. Foreign entities are eligible to participate in this Programme but are not eligible for funding.
- ii. Professional Bodies and NGOs are eligible to participate in this Programme but will only be eligible for funding if the particular activity has not been previously funded and does not itself fall within the normal sphere of activity, or within the services and consultancy normally carried out or provided, by the said Professional Body or NGO in their ordinary course of operation.
- iii. The term “defaulting” includes but is not limited to cases in which all parties participating in Council-funded projects have been deemed as being outside of the project timelines and have thus been or are in delay, and/or have not had technical deliverables, scientific and/or financial reporting and audits duly compiled and accepted by the Council for the said project.
- iv. Any application submitted by or including the participation of any legal person or legal entity having, in totality or in majority ownership, and/or the same shareholders, and/or partners or persons holding and/or exercising a controlling or management power in any other legal entity or being the same legal person which will have been at any time prior to such application declared as non-compliant or defaulting on any other contract or agreement entered into with the Council, shall be automatically declared as inadmissible.
- v. 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.

- vi. 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 Space Research Fund project that is out of the Grant Agreement timelines, shall automatically be disqualified from participation in this Call.
- vii. Programme funding for successful project submissions will be based on a periodic cash advance and will be regulated through a grant agreement establishing the terms and conditions governing the financing of the project.
- viii. Funding under this Programme is made available on the basis that any Partner does not benefit from any other grant, financial or fiscal/tax incentives in respect of the expenses related to execution of the project.

4.3 Pre-requisites

- i. 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.
- ii. Funds shall only be granted for projects that are in line with the terms of these Rules of Participation.
- iii. The project deliverables should have a definite completion timeframe of not more than 20 months and shall include all the requirements as specified in the End of Project Technical and Financial Report Template.
- iv. The project must be compliant with all national legislation and permitting requirements.
- v. Applicants shall have a good financial standing having passed the Due Diligence administrative check by MCST evaluators.

4.4 Funding limitations

(i) Grants associated with this funding modality are 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 Annex A of this document, capped to a maximum of €150,000. Additionally, the minimum possible funding requested for a project across the consortium shall not be less than €75,000.

(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.

4.5 Double Funding

Funding under this Programme is made available on the basis that none of the project Partners 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 Partner 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.

4.6 Other terms and conditions

- i. Applicants must have the necessary operational capacity, expertise and competence to undertake and complete the project within the proposed time frame, in line with the project plans for the acquisition of additional resources. MCST will conduct a Due Diligence exercise on each shortlisted applicant, the outcome of which will dictate whether the shortlisted applicant can proceed to Grant Agreement.
- ii. Projects, interventions and activities must be covered by all necessary regulatory and other relevant permits and must be carried out in full conformity with all applicable laws and permits. MCST shall have the right to withhold or cancel any letter of acceptance or Grant Agreement, or to impose additional terms and safeguards, if the applicant as a follow-up of the release of the letter of comfort from the permitting authority fails to obtain any required authorisation within 4 weeks of receiving notification of eligibility.
- iii. Potential eligibility for funding under this scheme shall not per se constitute sufficient justification for: the granting of any permit which would otherwise not be issued; circumventing or influencing any assessment; or non-application or relaxation of any appropriate conditions or quality standards.
- iv. Wherever relevant (e.g. in case of physical interventions on a building or site), the beneficiary must provide legally binding documentation that provides sufficient evidence of ownership, title, right of use or consent to intervene.
- v. Non-disclosure of any required information (including any details required for processing of the application or for subsequent administration, verification or monitoring), or submission of misleading information, shall invalidate the application and may also constitute grounds for judicial or other proceedings against the applicant.
- vi. Funding under this Programme is made available on the basis that any applicant does not benefit from any other grant, financial or fiscal/tax incentives in respect of the expenses related to execution of the project.
- vii. Any Maltese Legal Entity as described in Section 3 may be a beneficiary in a project and will be eligible for funding subject to the terms and conditions laid out in this document.

5 Consortium

Whilst a Consortium is not a requirement for eligibility to this Scheme, as in fact, a Maltese Legal Entity may be the sole applicant, partner complementarity in delivering the project objectives shall be considered during evaluation, as detailed in Section 9.

Should a Consortium be proposed at application stage, this shall only be eligible if the conditions outlined in the Definitions section of this document for a “Consortium”, are satisfied.

One of the Partners should be designated as the Lead Partner and will be responsible for the application for the Scheme, the appointment of a project coordinator and the correct execution of the project. The Lead Partner must be a Maltese Legal Entity.

Foreign entities are eligible to participate as a partner in a project and as a signatory to the Grant Agreement as described in the definition of the term “Partner”. However, foreign entities cannot receive direct funding through the grant. For those projects that require the participation of a foreign entity at a cost to the project, the foreign entities should be engaged through subcontracting as opposed to a partner and signatory in the grant agreement.

5.2 Lead Partner and Project Coordinator

For project applications involving a consortium of partners, at least one partner must have a significant role in the project, and this balance must be reflected in the allocation of tasks and funding. One of the partners should be designated as the **Lead Partner** and will be responsible for application submission on behalf of the Consortium, with prior endorsement and signature of application by the legal representative of each Partner. Should the endorsement be absent, a delegated authority should be sought and achieved. Any person may only be involved with one project partner.

The Lead Partner shall be also responsible of appointing a **Project Coordinator**. The role of Project Coordinator shall be performed by a physical person who is an employee of the Lead Partner. Legal entities other than physical persons, as well as foreign entities are not eligible to perform this role. The Project Coordinator has overall responsibility for the project, and shall have the following responsibilities:

- To coordinate the timely development of the project, including establishing and managing project activities, timeframes and financial estimates;
- To coordinate the timely activities of the individual project Partners on an ongoing basis, and to ensure that they fulfil their obligations in terms of the Contractual Agreement;
- To compile all reports including Technical and Financial Reports including submissions by all project Partners in a timely fashion;
- To act as the main point of contact between the Council and the project Partners;

The Lead Partner is responsible to ensure that the Project Coordinator complies with all obligations assigned within the contract governing this grant, including being responsible for the timely submission of reports and effective execution of the project.

5.3 Conflict with Fundamental Aims of the Fund

The participation of individuals in a Consortium must not be of such nature as to create conflicts with the fundamentals of capacity building, knowledge transfer and eventual commercialisation, which are amongst the fundamental aims of the Space Research Fund.

Two legal entities shall be regarded as independent of each other where neither is under the direct or indirect control of the other or under the same direct or indirect control as the other.

Control may take either of the following forms:

- a) The direct or indirect holding of more than 50% of the nominal value of the issued share capital in the legal entity concerned, or of a majority of the voting rights of the shareholders or associates of that entity.
- b) The direct or indirect holding, in fact or in law, of decision making powers in the legal entity concerned.

The following relationships between legal entities shall not in themselves be deemed to constitute controlling relationships:

- a) The same public investment corporation, institutional investor or venture-capital company has a direct or indirect holding of more than 50% of the nominal value of the issued share capital or a majority of voting rights of the shareholders or associates.
- b) The legal entities concerned are owned or supervised by the same public body.

Partners in a Consortium cannot be involved in any commercial transaction with another Partner in the same Consortium, or any other entity with shared shareholding, or within the same group of companies as the Partner, on any matter related to the project.

Funding distribution as applicable to consortia is further detailed in Section 7.2.

6 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.

6.2 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 have a duration of twenty (20) months. While research duration is expected to be 16-18 months, a duration of 20 months is being allocated to allow for necessary recruitment and ordering of equipment, software and required datasets.

For the purposes of funding and reporting, a project submission shall be divided into two Stages. Stage 1, which starts on the project start date, shall be equal to twelve (12) months duration. Stage 2, which may commence when the Council approves the attainment of deliverables associated with Stage 1, shall have a duration of eight (8) months. Funding requested for any one stage shall not exceed 80% of the 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.

6.3 Project Grant

The maximum possible funding available for a project beneficiary is €150,000. Additionally, the minimum possible funding requested for a project shall not be less than €75,000. If the beneficiary is a consortium the amount of funds stated are across the consortium.

Additional details on eligible costs and funding disbursement are provided in Sections 7 and 11.

6.4 Deliverables

6.4.1 Mandatory Deliverables

A beneficiary should:

- During project duration, publish at least two articles in local newspapers or magazines. These should raise awareness about the project and its benefits. A copy of these should be presented to the Council within two weeks of publication. All publications should be approved by the Council before publication and should include mention of the Council as per the guidelines in Section 12.

On project completion, or as directed by the Council, contribute to space-related outreach events held in Malta. Such events include, but are not limited to, the yearly ESPLORA space-related outreach event within the framework of the National Space Education Programme, which is supported by the European Space Agency.

- Always cooperate with the Council in the promotion of the Space Research Fund and related sector by delivering presentations about the Project or through other reasonable means at the request of the Council.
- 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:
 - A minimum of two interim meetings per stage to verbally update the Council on progress. Such meetings shall be reasonably spread throughout project duration.
 - Project Progress Report, to be submitted at the end of Stage 1. Additional reporting details are found in Section 11.3.
 - End of Project Technical Report, to be submitted within one (1) month of the project completion date. In the case of a consortium, any activity details must be broken down for each Project Partner. Additional reporting details are found in Section 11.4
 - End of Project Financial Report and related Audit Report, to be submitted within one (1) month of the project completion date. In the case of a consortium, any financial details must be broken down for each Project Partner. Additional reporting details are found in Section 11.5.

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 one (1) month 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.

6.4.2 Recommended Deliverables

Further to the mandatory deliverables, the Council encourages the deliverables below. The Council does not oblige such deliverables, however commitment of such recommended deliverables by the applicant at the application stage may enhance the strength of the application form. The recommended deliverables include:

- Monographs and/or peer-reviewed papers for accepted publication in international open access journals based on the work carried out through the Project;
- Oral presentation/s at international conference/s on the work carried out through the Project;
- The attainment of undergraduate degrees and/or postgraduate degrees and/or doctoral/post-doctoral research. (In cases where the project duration is insufficient for the purpose of submitting a degree, there has to be a commitment to complete the degree outside the duration of the project utilising other sources of funding.)
- Additional project dissemination activities including but not limited to: fairs, workshops and events. Examples include: Science in the City, R&I cafes, Enterprise European Network events, project exhibitions, etc.
- Commercial commitments such as technology innovations to be included in a partner's existing product or service.
- Commercial commitments such as technology transfer licences.

A copy of all publications must be presented to the Council before any retention is paid by the same. The Council appreciates that the attainment of these deliverables may depend on externalities. The applicant is expected to take these into consideration when submitting the application form. Although these deliverables are non-compulsory, if quoted as committed deliverables in the Application stage, they must be adhered to.

7 Eligible and Ineligible Costs

Details on the eligible costs under this funding modality are provided in Annex A.

Prospective applicants are welcome to contact the Council for more information on the implications of these State Aid Regulations.

7.2 Funding Distribution between Partners

In accordance with the objectives of this fund, a project application comprising a consortium of partners should represent a reasonable distribution of workload and financing across consortium partners. No single Partner should dominate the project.

Project applications submitted by a consortium of partners shall note the following funding limitations:

- Overall portion of funding for any individual Partner shall be limited to 75% of the project grant;
- Combined funding for any group of Partners within a *category* (Public Entities or Private Entities) shall be limited to 75% of the project grant.

7.3 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
- Organising a conference
- Personnel hours for travelling
- Any other costs not listed down in Annex.

8 The Application Process

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

The selection and funding of proposals under this Programme shall be on a competitive basis. Applicants should refer to the eligibility criteria in Section 4.

8.2 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.

All submissions shall include:

- The application form in Microsoft Word (.docx) format using the application 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 8.4.
- Memorandum & Articles of Association of all 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).

All applications shall be evaluated according to the procedure outlined under Section 9 of these Rules for Participation. The applicant should ensure complete compliance to the 'Rules for



Participation 2020 – State Aid not Applicable 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 the prescribed maximum word count and/or page limits, shall be disregarded in the evaluation process.

In cases where deviations from the mandatory deliverables or budgets detailed herein are required, applicants should be guided by Section 8.4 below. The content of the Application Form will be directly appended to the Grant Agreements for successful applicants and will constitute an integral part of the associated obligations.

Application Forms can either be sent electronically to space.mcst@gov.mt with “Space Research Fund 2020 Application Submission” 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.

8.3 Considerations at Application Stage

8.3.1 Respecting Lead Times

All organisations, including the Council, have their internal procedures for processing, approving and signing off on legally binding documents. Beneficiaries are to ensure that they are aware of these lead times in their organisation and, if relevant, all the other organisations constituting the consortium. It is the applicant’s responsibility to ask for information on lead times pertaining to the Council. Partners should also consider personal commitments, such as vacation leave, when planning to submit an application.

8.3.2 Assistance with Applications

Prospective Project Partners are encouraged to seek the advice of the Council in the preparation of the project application. This should help identify any areas of concern prior to the submission of the application and lead to a better quality of submission. Advice shall only be given in respect to these Rules for Participation and not on technical grounds. Applicants are particularly encouraged to seek the Council's guidance through proposal-specific one-to-one sessions to ensure that the single-stage application documentation is complete and effective, as once submitted, cannot be edited.

8.3.3 Confidentiality of Submissions

Unless otherwise indicated, all project application submissions except for the abstract, shall be treated in strict confidence. All project applications will be passed-on in their entirety to the external evaluators and due diligence experts, who are bound by confidentiality and shall be required to declare that they do not have any conflict of interest in reviewing the individual proposals. Reports submitted under this programme may also, at the Council's discretion, be forwarded in part or in their entirety to external evaluators appointed by the Council.

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 aid under the Scheme is in line with:

- i. The Rules for Participation;
- ii. Data Protection Act, Chapter 440 of the Laws of Malta and Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).
- iii. 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'.

8.4 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 within a particular stage of a single partner, totalling a maximum of 5% of that partner’s overall stage value, 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 within a particular stage, or from one stage to the next, that are smaller than 10% of stage value or project value respectively, will be considered by the Council upon an email request by the coordinator to the Council.
- Transfer of project funds between line items within a particular stage, or from one stage to the next, that are greater than 10% of the stage value or project value respectively, will be considered by the Council upon an official, signed request by the coordinator to the Council. The change will then be implemented in an addendum signed by all partners.

9 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 8. During this step the Council shall also seek state aid clearance based on the non-economic justifications provided in the application form. Projects that are administratively compliant shall pass to the next step.
- **Content Evaluation:** The evaluation board shall evaluate the content of project proposals based on the criteria details in Section 9.2. Proposals shall obtain a mark >65% over all 3 criteria (Excellence, Impact, Implementation), while obtaining a pass mark (50%) within each of the three criteria, shall pass to the next step.
- **Due Diligence:** This step involves an investigation of the applicant entities prior the signing the Grant Agreement.

For a project to be eligible for funding it must pass all three steps.

For applications submitted under the this funding modality, a Technical Evaluation Committee will be set up by the Council in order to assess that the proposed research indeed does not have any state-aid implications.

9.2 Content Evaluation Criteria

The Evaluation board shall be evaluating applications across three criteria: Excellence, Impact and Implementation. The weighting of each criterion depends on the stream chosen at application stage:

- *Stream 1: Technology Concept Research (TRL 1 to 4)*
- *Stream 2: Applied Technology Development (TRL 5+)*

Excellence Criterion Stream 1: /40 Stream 2: /25
Clarity of the definition of sector problem areas and pain points, in which the technical objective will have an impact.
In terms of the concept, aims and objectives put forward in the research proposal as well as the development proposed, what is the degree of scientific validity?
Clarity of the technical objectives and definition of the requirements for the proposed work.
Quality of engineering approach and discussion of risks/problem areas to the proposed project. Is the proposed approach credible?
Extent to which the proposed work is ambitious, has innovation potential, and is beyond the state of the art (e.g. ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts and approaches). Adequacy of the current (TRL) and target maturity status (TRL) of the development. Is this sufficiently ambitious for the requested funding?

Impact Criterion Stream 1: /30 Stream 2: /45
Does the proposal promise publications in peer reviewed journals to an appropriate level? Are these publications open access, thus enabling increased dissemination?
Does the research go beyond comparable solutions at European level or is it simply duplicating effort? Does the proposal exhibit prospects that help strengthening the research acumen of local researchers in a way that helps better position them to participate in European funding programmes? What about prospects for international networking?
What is the potential of the idea being taken forward through other funding streams beyond the Space Research Fund? Does the applicant exhibit any vision or capability in the regard?
Are the proposed outputs and outcomes coherent with respect to the project ambition and funding requested (with respect to both the applicant entities as well as the local economy)? Do medium term (5 years) research prospects appear lucrative and credible? Furthermore, is the impact relating to a single sector or will it have cross-cutting and multidisciplinary impact on more than one sector?
Does the proposal promise solutions that may help end users (government, clients, etc.) deliver/consume smarter services? Any other environmental and socially important impacts, not covered in the above?
Is the applicant organisation/s leveraging new personnel, apart from its core team, to be involved in a significant contribution to the project? Is there evidence of growth of critical mass in this regard?
To what extent is the proposal leveraging local favourable conditions such as Malta's geographic location, topography and demography, such that it exhibits the potential of Malta to be involved in similar test bed opportunities, also with foreign researchers? How does the international networking promote test bed research for Malta?

Effectiveness of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results (including to communicate the project, and to manage research data where relevant)

Have articles in newspapers and magazines been included in the dissemination plan?

Does the proposal include additional national project dissemination activities such as: fairs, workshops and events? Examples include: Science in the City, R&I cafes, Enterprise European Network events, project exhibitions and so on? Are there also elements of European dissemination?

Implementation Criterion

Stream 1: /30

Stream 2: /30

Background and experience of the entity/entities related to the particular field concerned. Adequacy of the key personnel for the execution of the work. Does the beneficiary/consortium possess, or intend to subcontract, the necessary skills to understand the sectorial market and thus promise an effective route to commercialisation? (One should consider that micro entities are also eligible for this programme. Therefore, in cases where the applicant does not possess the necessary skills for successful research deployment, they need to at least indicate how they are to leverage partners in the consortium).

Complementarity of the different consortium partners in delivering the project objectives. Is the work plan effective with respect to partner workload distribution according to their competencies? Does the consortium exhibit potential for knowledge transfer between academia and industry? Does the consortium include potential users, or have potential users been engaged through a formalised agreement, or through a 'letter of intent' (with weight being stronger in that order)?

Is the coherence and effectiveness of the work plan, including proposed work packages, proposed deliverables and appropriateness of the allocation of resources satisfactory when considering the level of funding being requested? Are the proposed budgets coherent with the project ambitions and technology development, such that funds are planned to be used effectively and appropriately? Have the other relevant resources, such as data requirement, software packages and other relevant infrastructure been identified and accounted for in the planning of the proposal?

Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures, including risk and innovation management. Have key project risks been identified and discussed? Are the proposed solutions credible? Are the timelines realistic and well balanced considering the inherent risks of such R&I projects, including but not limited to, risks related to the recruitment process?

Other considerations:

If two or more projects obtain the same mark following evaluation, then the Council shall give priority to that project which:

- has successfully invested or obtained other sources of financing covering other parts of the project in accordance with Section 4.5 of these Rules for Participation. Such sources are to be listed in the application form.
- takes into consideration the implementation of gender equality in the research project.

10 Post Selection Process

10.2 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.

10.3 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

It is to be noted that to be eligible for funding, all expenses must be incurred between the Start Date and the End Date of the Project.

11 Funding, Management and Progress Monitoring

11.2 Allocation and Disbursement of Funding

For the purposes of funding and reporting, a project submission shall be divided into two Stages. Stage 1, which starts on the project start date, shall be equal to twelve (12) months duration. Stage 2, which may commence when the council approves the deliverables associated with the previous stage, shall have a duration of eight (8) months. Funding requested for any one stage shall not exceed 80% of the 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 periodic funding will be allocated according to the following schedule:

- At the beginning of each stage, the Council will provide the relevant pre-financing to the lead beneficiary. This will include both direct and indirect eligible costs.
- A retention consisting of 20% of the project grant shall be withheld by the Council and only released upon successful completion of the project and approval of all mandatory deliverables. This retention is deducted from the funds allocated to Stage 2 and from the preceding stage, if necessary.
- The beneficiary will be required to submit a Progress Report at the end of Stage 1. Apart from technical activity progress, the progress report should also contain details of actual expenditure over the first stage, together with an updated forecast of projected expenditure for the second stage. If the beneficiary is a consortium, the progress report shall be submitted by the Lead Partner, through the Project Coordinator. In this case technical and financial details must be broken down for each Project Partner. The Progress Report shall be approved by the Council before moving to the next stage.
- Normally underspends are retrieved by the Council following the financial audited report. However, the council reserves the right to modify tranche payments if it deems that the underspend within the previous stage is considerable.

11.3 Progress Report

The progress report is due at the end of Stage 1. If the beneficiary is a consortium, the progress report which is to be submitted by the lead partner, shall include all technical and financial reporting broken down for each project partner. The progress report, as directed by the appropriate template provided with the Grant Agreement, shall include the following:

- An account of project activity and achievements over the past year compared to the originally submitted application;
- An account of actual expenditure over the past year 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 Stage 2;
- An updated forecast of projected expenditure for Stage 2.

11.4 End of Project Technical Report

Following the termination of the project or expiry of the Grant Agreement, the beneficiary shall submit a Final Technical Project Report. If the beneficiary is a consortium, the progress report, which is to be submitted by the lead partner, shall include all activity broken down for each project partner. This report shall be prepared in accordance with the appropriate template provided with the Grant Agreement.

11.5 End of Project Final Financial Report and Audit Report

Following the termination of the project or expiry of the Grant Agreement, the beneficiary is required to submit an audited Final Financial Report for the whole project, thus covering the work and expenditure. If the beneficiary is a consortium, the audited Final Financial Report which is to be submitted by the Lead Partner shall cover the work and expenditure undertaken by all the Partners. 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 audit should determine the total eligible costs and compare these to funds forwarded to the Partners.

The Council reserves the right to appoint an auditor to audit the Project Financial Audit as submitted by the beneficiary. Following finalisation of the financial audit, the technical audit may be performed based on the templates provided by the Council.

As soon as the verifications and audits are finalised and cleared the Council will disburse the second tranche of funding due to the Partners. In the case of overpayment, the Partners will be required to refund the under-spent amount to the Council within a specific timeframe, or as agreed to with the Council, through the Project Coordinator.

11.6 Detailed Audit

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 Space Research 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.

11.7 Subcontracting

When a component of the project work is a subcontracted activity, the following considerations shall apply:

- The value of the subcontracting should not exceed 25% of the total project grant. Any travel costs related to subcontractors contribute to this 25% limit and shall be listed under the subcontracting budget line;
- The beneficiary or Lead Partner remains responsible for the timely delivery of the subcontracted tasks;
- The beneficiary or Lead Partner shall ensure that such a third party is selected in a manner which is transparent, fair and impartial.
- The beneficiary or Lead Partner should ensure that the attainment of any services or goods are in line with the respective procurement guidelines.
- Subcontracting to foreign companies should only be considered if suitable expertise is not available locally. This must be duly justified.
- Joint bids from subcontractors (local or foreign) may be considered if these are presented in the form of a supplier consortium. Preference will be given to partners who have previous experience working together on similar projects. Participation of foreign subcontractors shall always be duly justified.
- Beneficiaries shall ensure that there is no discrimination between bidders and that all bidders are treated equally and transparently in all calls for quotations.

11.8 Accountability

When the beneficiary is a consortium, each partner should keep a separate bank account or records, clearly distinguishable from its other accounting records. All relevant 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. Direct eligible costs must be backed up with the relevant documentation as specified in the Grant Agreement.

12 Dissemination and Externalisation

12.2 Dissemination and externalisation plan

The mandatory deliverables involving dissemination can be found in Section 6.4.1. Apart from these, 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.

12.3 Referencing

Any articles and text material 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 Space Research 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 Space Research Fund and the Council, the Consortium 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 Space Research Fund and the Council, associated costs will be considered ineligible.

13 Supervening Circumstances

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 preliminary 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.

13.2 Project Extension

Project extension requests are to be submitted in writing to the Council by not later than one (1) month before the original stage end date. Such extensions will be granted at the sole and unfettered discretion of the Council. Provided that the fact that the Council will have accepted a request for an extension in one stage will not in any manner bind or be interpreted as binding the Council to accept a request for an extension in another stage.

13.3 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. However, the Council will provide a maximum of two notices indicating a rectification period of one month each.

13.4 Partner Withdrawal

A consortium partner wishing to withdraw from a funded project, must present their case to the Council through their Project coordinator. As a result, and at its discretion, the Council may request the refunding of money disbursed to that partner and may even terminate the project in its entirety. All Project partners would still be obliged to provide all stage technical and financial reporting at their own expense. The Council shall then, at its own discretion, either give such directives as it deems necessary for the reallocation of tasks among the remaining Partners or the nomination of a replacement partner, for the furtherance on the project or re-assess the project in its entirety accordingly.

In extenuating circumstances, the Council may at its discretion, consider suggestions for replacement of a Partner. However, the project proposal would need to be re-evaluated through internal evaluators and the Space Research Fund Committee. Should this be the case, the overall rules for participation would need to be adhered to and the technical and financial distribution of the projects should remain unchanged.

14 Interpretation of Rules

This document endeavours to establish comprehensive and unambiguous rules governing participation in the Space Research 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.

Annex A

Details on Eligible Costs

A.1 Details on Eligible costs

A.1.1 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

- The total cost of funded hours per project for existing employees from the applicant's organisation or supporting organisation shall not exceed 20% of the project value.
- This includes existing personnel that, for the purpose of the project, are provided with separate part-time contracts to extend their working hours with the entity.
- Personnel Costs related to Project Management are further limited to 10% of the project value and form part of the 20% limit set on existing personnel costs. E.g. *For a €150,000 project value, €30,000 may be used for existing personnel costs. Of these €30,000, €15,000 may be used for management.*
- Any project management which is not carried out by any of the partners shall be deemed to be subcontracting and be subject to the 10% maximum threshold detailed above. This also contributes to the 25% maximum referred to subcontracting costs.
- The permissible number of hours funded by this fund is not to exceed an average of 10 hours per week per existing employee, as part of their normal working hours.
- Those employees that have utilised elsewhere their allocated quota of research hours defined in their contract can apply for pro rata payment, up to a maximum of an additional 10 hours per week, for supervisory, research or management hours (overseas travel hours are ineligible) as an eligible cost of the project, if this is permissible within their contract of employment. Overtime is permitted if this is part of their employment contract.

New Personnel

- The salary of senior researchers, researchers, technicians, operators and research support assistants that are employed specifically for the project shall not form part of the above-mentioned personnel costs limit of 20% of the project value.
- 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. **Note that for every engaged student, a full-time researcher must be employed by the beneficiary.**

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	2020 Hourly rates (Guidelines)	2021 Hourly rates (Guidelines)	Limits per project (not flexible)
Top Management or equivalent	From € 32.09 to € 39.51	From € 33.69 to € 41.49	Max 2 per project
Middle Management, or equivalent	Up to €32.08	Up to €33.68	Max 2 per project
Senior Researcher ¹ or equivalent	From € 22.82 to € 32.08	From € 23.96 to € 33.68	Max 2 per project
Researcher ² or equivalent	From €12.66 to € 22.81	From €13.29 to € 23.95	No Limits
Operational, technician, research support assistant or equivalent	Up to €12.65	Up to €13.28	No Limits

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.

The rates stated in the table above are for the year 2020 and 2021. For activities in 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 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 may be required by the auditors.

b) Specialised equipment

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 (g).

c) Travel Costs

These costs 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 who are dedicating effort to this project institution. The budget justification should include the destination, number of people travelling and dates or duration of your stay for all anticipated travel. Applicants are to approach the Council to request a deviation should they require any funding to be directed to travel for access to international research structures and/or training. Travel shall be considered eligible if it is the most financially advantageous path of travel utilizing normal commercial transport in the economy class. Details on eligible indirect costs associated with overheads related to such travel costs are detailed in part (g).

d) 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 (g).

e) Consumables

Overall value of consumables typically cannot exceed 30% of project value. Proposals with consumables exceeding 30% of the project value need to be discussed at application stage. Details on eligible indirect costs associated with overheads related to such consumables are detailed in part (g).

f) Subcontracted Activities

Subcontracted Activity means any activity related to the project, (including but not limited to consultancy), which is not carried out directly by a Partner or its employees, but is carried out by any third party (local or foreign) individual, company, partnership or entity, under whatsoever terms and conditions.

Total subcontracted activities within a project shall be up to a limit of 25% of the project value, provided that prior approval is attained from the Committee before subcontracting to ensure fair procurement procedures.

g) Overheads

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

- subcontracting
- items of equipment above €5000
- consumables above €5000.

Note that for equipment, the capping of €500 indirect costs (capping for items of equipment above €5000) is per piece while for consumables, the capping of €500 (capping for consumables above €5000) is for the total amount of consumables per partner.

A.1.2 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 of any value private entity partners are required to demonstrate adequate market testing, obtaining three quotations from three different, independent, and relevant sources.
- Public entity partners are to follow Public Procurement Regulations in their entirety.
- 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 in the form of an advert published in a Sunday newspaper (minimum size of advert: 2 columns by 8 cm) and interview process.
- Commercial transactions between consortium partners, or between a consortium partner and a company with similar shareholding to a consortium partner, is not allowed.

A.1.3 Aid Intensity

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 €150,000. Additionally, the minimum possible funding requested for a project across the consortium shall not be less than €75,000.