



The Malta Council for
Science & Technology



PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT
FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES,
DIGITAL ECONOMY AND INNOVATION

FUSION R&I Commercialisation Voucher Programme 2014-2020

Programme Procedures

Version 10 Jan 2018



FUSION
The R+I
Programme

The Process

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

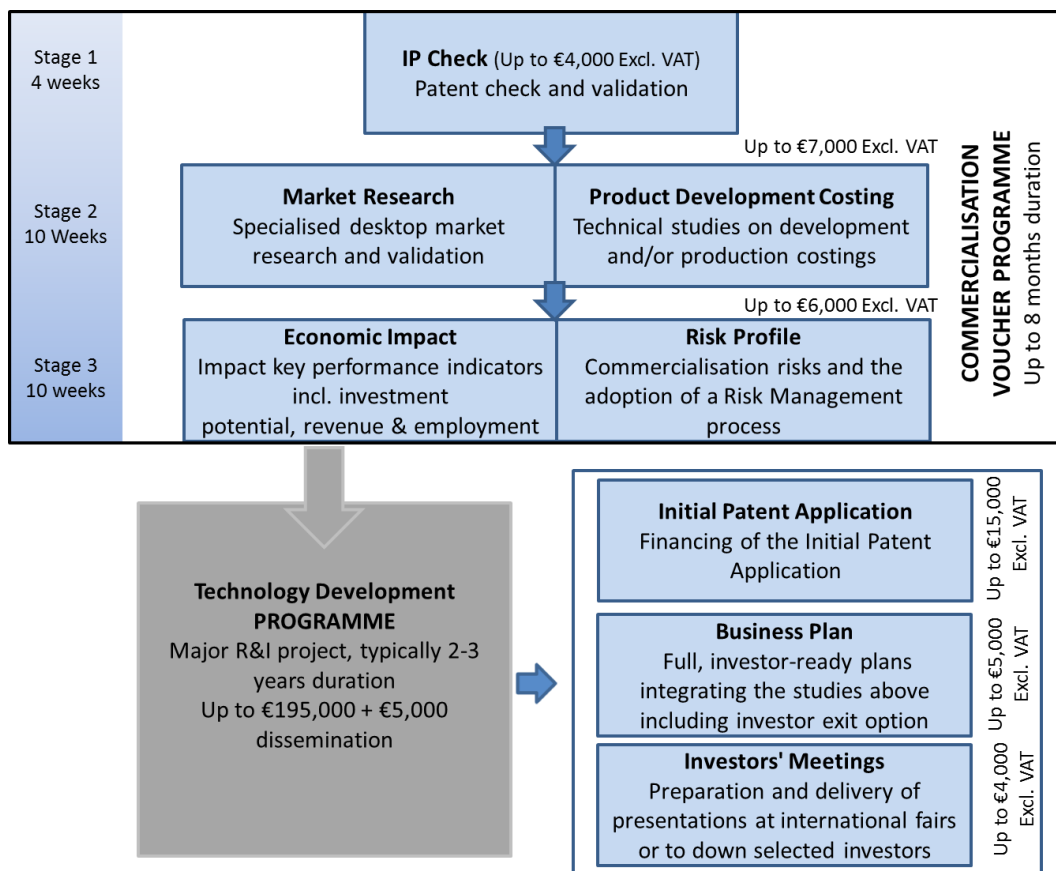


Figure 1: Sequential Phases of FUSION

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

All applications received are subjected to a Scientific Opinion Evaluation. The eight (8) top scoring submissions, that is, one (1) submission per Smart Specialisation area, will be selected for funding. Another four (4) top scoring submissions across all Smart Specialisation areas will also be selected for funding. The twelve (12) submissions will then be offered a Voucher Agreement and invited to proceed to Stage 1 - IP Check. The stages are then followed sequentially. Progression from one stage to the next requires a positive review of the previous stage report (>50%) from a technical expert evaluator approved by the Council.

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

1. Application Assistance

Information on the programme is available on the Council website (http://www.mcst.gov.mt/R_A_I/CommercialisationVouchers.aspx) and will be supplemented by information sessions prior to each Call. Applicants are encouraged to familiarise themselves with all the relevant documentation prior to approaching the Council. The R&I Programmes Unit will address any administrative enquiries and can review and/or discuss draft applications with candidates. Further information can be obtained by calling Ms. Claudine Dimech on 23602174 or Dr. Melchior Cini on 23602153.

2. Calls for Applications for the Commercialisation Voucher Programme

The call for applications will be issued twice a year. The first call which was launched on the **5th of January 2018**, will close at **noon on 19th February 2018**. The second call will open in May 2018 and will close in June 2018. The call for applications for the Commercialisation Voucher Programme is announced on the website of the Malta Council for Science and Technology (www.mcst.gov.mt) and it will incorporate all relevant documentation and guidelines. Upon receipt of an application, a Scientific Opinion evaluation will be initiated. The application results will be published within 20 working days from the closing date of the call for applications. Following the publication of results, the successful applicants will automatically enter the first stage of the Commercialisation Voucher Programme.

3. Submission of Application

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

Interested applicants are to submit their application electronically in PDF format to voucher.mcst@gov.mt using "**CVP 2018 Call 1 Application**" as a subject heading. Alternatively, interested applicants may also submit their application personally, by hand at the Malta Council for Science and Technology, Villa Bighi, Kalkara. Applications must be received by not later than **noon on the 19th of February 2018**. Regrettably, late applications will be declined.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure the timely and correct delivery of the application to the Council. Upon receipt of an application, the Council will acknowledge receipt thereof by email. If the applicant does not receive an email acknowledging his/her application within 2 working days, he/she must contact the Council.

4. Priority Areas and Scientific Evaluation

Priority will be given to applications aligned to the smart specialisation areas as defined in the National Research and Innovation 2020 Strategy (<http://mcst.gov.mt/policy-strategy/national-research-innovation-strategy/>). Following the closure of the call, the Council shall submit the application **to three independent and external evaluators** for a scientific opinion evaluation. An average score will be computed from all the three scientific evaluations and the outcome thereof will result as the final score. A threshold of 65/100 is required for acceptance. Acceptance will be assessed on 3 categories namely a) Excellence, b) Impact and c) Implementation. Furthermore, a pass mark of 25/40 will be required for Excellence, 25/40 for Impact and 15/20 for Implementation. The external evaluators providing scientific opinion will be required to sign a non-disclosure clause in their contract of engagement with the Council. This will ensure that the evaluators will retain confidentiality at all times.

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

5. Granting of Vouchers

5.1 Acceptance Meeting

Once an application is selected for funding, the beneficiary will be given two copies of the Voucher Agreement for signature. The beneficiary will also be given an Inventor Disclosure Form template to be filled in and returned together with the signed copies of the Grant Agreement. These documents must be signed and initialised or stamped on each page. Failure to return these documents in time, will automatically nullify and render the Voucher Agreement invalid. The Voucher Agreement is valid for all three stages, subject to the previous stage having been successfully completed and approved by the Council.

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

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

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

5.2 Other Notification

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

6. Evaluation of Voucher Activities

Once the Service Provider finalises the report it is presented to the Council for onward forwarding to an independent expert evaluator. These are also bound by confidentiality through a non-disclosure clause within their contract of engagement with the Council. The evaluator is provided with a 7 day period for completion of their report. Should the result of the evaluation result in a score greater than 70/100, feedback on the outcome, together with observations shall be provided to the beneficiary by the Council through electronic mail, together with a confirmation to proceed to the next stage of the voucher programme. For scores between 50 and 69/100, the Council will send an email to both the service provider and beneficiary containing the evaluation feedback provided by the independent evaluator for improvement where applicable. Additionally, the Council may also opt to set up an evaluation meeting, in which both the Service Provider and the Beneficiary shall be called in to be present. Evaluation meetings are intended to support both the beneficiary and service provider to address key issues and shortcomings within the report presented to the Council and/or to address any arising issues, since doing so could potentially improve the score for the project. An extension for revision of reports may be provided at the Council's discretion. Beneficiaries can provide clarifications through the service provider without changing the original idea, that is, any clarifications should not encompass a redeveloped idea. Beneficiaries that would like to modify the original idea can reapply under a subsequent call subject to reassessment of the amended project idea. Should a service provider clearly conclude a report by stating that the project is not viable, the Commercialisation Voucher Programme shall be halted. Also, for evaluation scores of 49/100 or less, the Commercialisation Voucher Programme shall immediately be halted.

7. Reimbursement

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

Once the Council clears the report, the Beneficiary will be advised to proceed with the payment to the service provider.

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

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

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

8. Related Documents

- Application Form
- Annex I
- FUSION Activity Guidelines
- FUSION Rules for Participation
- VAT Declaration Form