

Higher Education System Innovation and Transformation Call 2018

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Call for Proposals

Higher education institutions are invited to make proposals for funding under the Innovation and Transformation Call 2018. The amount of funding available in 2018 is €5m. It is envisaged a further call for funding will be issued in 2019.

1.2 Background

An independent Expert Panel was appointed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in 2016 to review the current allocation model for funding higher education and to make recommendations on the most appropriate funding model for the future. The review involved research and analysis and extensive consultation with stakeholders, including bilateral meetings. The review is informed by 11 Working Papers which examined, inter alia, key issues and questions, the cost drivers and the costing system underpinning higher education and international funding allocation approaches. The [Review of the Allocation Model for Funding Higher Education Institutions](#) was announced by the Minister for Education and Skills in January 2018.

The review recommends reforms to the funding model. It highlights the importance of incentivising and rewarding innovation and transformation in the higher education sector. Specifically, the review recommends that a competitive fund should be established to support innovative and transformative proposals from institutions or groups of institutions with potential application and impact across the higher education system. These proposals may include new methods of delivering learning or shared approaches to generate efficiencies.

1.3 Overall aims and objectives of programme

The aims of this programme are:

1. To support innovative and transformative proposals from institutions or groups of institutions with potential application and impact across the higher education system.
2. To align innovation and transformation with National strategic objectives and the Key System Objectives for the higher education system.

The areas prioritised for the first Innovation and transformation call in 2018 are as follows:

- the support of innovation, transformation and quality improvement in teaching and student learning outcomes;
- innovation and transformation in flexible, distance and e-learning opportunities and programmes;
- the support of student retention and progression both at individual, and institutional level and through inter-institutional, sectoral and inter-sectoral collaboration;
- measures to support Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the HE Sector.

Proposals must relate to one of these areas and must be innovative.

In addition, institutions must demonstrate how their proposal aligns with one or more of the *key system objectives for the higher education system 2018-2020*.

Key System Objectives for the Higher Education System 2018 -2020

Objective 1: Providing a strong talent pipeline combining knowledge, skills & employability which responds effectively to the needs of our enterprise, public service and community sectors, both nationally and regionally, and maintains Irish leadership in Europe for skill availability

Objective 2: Creating rich opportunities for national and international engagement which enhances the learning environment and delivers a strong bridge to enterprise and the wider community

Objective 3: Excellent research, development innovation and transformation that has relevance, growing engagement with external partners and impact for the economy and society and strengthens our standing to become an Innovation and Transformation Leader in Europe.

Objective 4: Significantly improves the equality of opportunity through Education and Training and recruits a student body that reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population

Objective 5: Demonstrates consistent improvement in the quality of the learning environment with a close eye to international best practice through a strong focus on quality & academic excellence

Objective 6: Demonstrates consistent improvement in governance, leadership and operational excellence.

Section 2: Programme Criteria and Guidelines

2.1 Principles and process for allocation

In accordance with the goals and objectives of the programme as outlined above the potential projects will be evaluated based on the following criteria;

1. Impact and Value for money

Institutions must detail the projected impact that the proposal will have on the institution, and demonstrate how their proposal represents value for money for the institution(s). Institutions should include an outline of the processes for the operational and financial management of the project. Where collaboration is proposed, evidence will be required that the proposed alliances are substantive.

2. The level of Innovation

Institutions are required to demonstrate how both the quality of the proposal being presented and the outcomes expected are enhanced through innovation. Institutions should specify the milestones, output measurements, indicators and other evidence which will be used to monitor the performance and progress of the proposal.

3. Alignment with national strategic objectives

Institutions must demonstrate that a proposal fits within their strategic plans are informed by national policy objectives and national and regional social and economic needs.

4. Demonstrated capacity to deliver

Institutions must provide evidence of their capacity to deliver on the proposal.

5. Replicability

Institutions are asked to demonstrate how proposals are compatible with replication, particularly the potential for application and impact across the higher education system.

2.2 Specific Programme criteria

- The fund will not be utilised to fund ongoing operations, the creation of physical capacity or proposals that could reasonably be expected to be funded

from other public funding sources, e.g. research funding agencies. This fund is specifically to acknowledge and promote innovative proposals in higher education. Therefore applications that relate to routine or current business practices will not be considered.

- There would be a commitment to the “mainstreaming” by the institutions of activities funded under the scheme in order to share the benefit of the learning gained from the specific measures supported under the Fund.
- Each institution, including those participating in collaborative projects, would be required to report bi-annually on actions funded under this programme for the duration of the funding and to submit a final report upon its cessation.
- Institutions may propose projects which have multi-annual requirements (up to 3 years) as well as projects with an implementation timespan of a year or less.

Section 3: Funding

3.1 Allocation of overall scheme budget

There will be an upper limit of €1m per annum under this call for collaborative proposals from groups of institutions with potential application and impact across the system. For non-collaborative proposals, the upper limit will be €500,000 per annum. Only 3 proposals will be allowed per institution (including collaborative and non-collaborative proposals).

Up to three sectoral proposals will be accepted from both the IUA and THEA. An institution must act as an administrative lead for the sectoral proposal. Please note that sectoral proposals will not count towards permitted number of institutional proposals.

Section 4 Application Procedure and Assessment

4.1 Application Procedure

In submitting a proposal, the institution will be deemed to have accepted the conditions outlined in this and any subsequent communications from the HEA regarding this programme and to have agreed to be bound by them. Furthermore, signing of the proposal by the head of institution (President, Provost, Chief Executive, etc.) reflects acceptance of the award and a commitment to provide the necessary support for the project. All proposals must be signed by the head of the institution.

In the case of collaborative proposals, the proposal must be signed by the head of the institution in all partner institution(s).

Institutions are required to submit documentation as detailed in the call application template. Proposals should be submitted using the online portal <http://hea.ie/funding-calls/innovation-call-2018/>, by noon on 13th September 2018.

4.2 Assessment Panel and Scoring

Proposals will be assessed by the international expert panel convened for the Strategy and Performance Dialogue Process for 2018. Institutions should seek to benchmark and use international best practice to inform their proposals.

Proposals will be scored as follows (Max. 100 marks):

1. Impact and value for money (15 marks)
2. Level of Innovation (40 marks)
3. Alignment with national strategic objectives (15 marks)
4. Demonstrated capacity to deliver (15 marks)
5. Replicable (15 marks)

4.3 Timeframe

Call issue to Institutions	24 th July 2018
Institutions to return submissions	12:00, 13 th September 2018
External Panel to review submissions	October 2018
Allocation of funding	November 2018

Section 5 Implementation

5.1 Monitoring

The proposal will specify the milestones, output measurements, indicators and other evidence which will be used to monitor the performance and progress of the proposal.

Reports covering all financial and programmatic aspects of the project will be required at the end of six months and at the end of each year and progress will be assessed based on the stated projected milestones and outputs for that time point. These

reports will be subject to review by the HEA. The HEA may request supplementary information and documentation if deemed necessary to support the report.

The release of funds will be dependent upon the submission of satisfactory progress reports. If an institution is found to be in breach of the programme's terms, the HEA reserves the right to take appropriate action, which may include recovering the funding allocated.

All successful applicants must be willing to share information and learning to assist the introduction of the innovative practice across the sector in so far as possible.

END

NOTES;

1 Universities, DIT, Institutes of Technology, RCSI, National College of Art and Design, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, St. Angela's College Sligo, HEAnet, Royal Irish Academy. Publicly funded higher education institutions who are not funded directly by the HEA may be eligible for funding as part of a wider collaborative proposal.