

Call for submissions October 2017

Support for restructuring of the higher education landscape

Context

The National Strategy for Higher Education provides for substantial changes to the landscape of Irish higher education.

The HEA, with the support of the Department of Education and Skills, recognises that such reforms carry some additional costs and has provided for a fund to support HEIs with these costs. The fund is not expected to be able to cover all costs arising, but to make a contribution to those costs.

The HEA is now inviting submissions for funding support in respect of the costs arising from landscape reform as part of the implementation of the National Strategy for Higher Education. The total funding available under this call in academic year 2017/18 will be c. €6M (including c.€4M funding from the Department of Education and Skills in support of Technological University development).

This call follows the allocation of similar landscape reconfiguration funding by the HEA in 2015/16.

Policy Environment

The report on the *Reconfiguration of the Irish System of Higher Education, 2012*¹, set an outline structure for the higher education system, including numbers, types and locations of institutions and their agreed missions. These developments have provided a structure through which the HEA evaluates the performance of institutions, based on their missions, through a process of strategic dialogue performance funding.

In 2014, the HEA agreed to provide funding to support the sorts of changes recommended in the landscape report, given that such mergers and reconfigurations have costs attached. The HEA provided such funding to assist the institutions concerned in proceeding with the actions required.

In October 2015, among the key education measures announced for Budget 2016, the Minister for Education and Skills allocated an additional €2 million funding to support

¹ See: <http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/International-Panel-Report-on-Reconfiguration.pdf>

the establishment of Technological Universities. In October 2016, a further €4 million was provided for 2017. The 2017 funding will be allocated via this call for proposals.

In July 2017, the Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton T.D., together with the Minister of State for Higher Education, Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D. announced² their intention to prioritise the passing of the Technological Universities Bill following Government approval to the drafting of insertions and amendments to the 2015 Bill.

As a result of a number of issues raised regarding the Technological Universities Bill, the Minister had commenced a consultation with stakeholders, including Trade Unions, in May 2016. As part of that process, a clarification document was agreed between the Department, Teachers' Union of Ireland and the Technological Higher Education Association. TUI members voted to accept the agreement in June 2017 and they will now suspend their industrial action in relation to the development of Technological Universities. A clarification document also issued to IMPACT as part of this process.

This call takes account of that detailed consultation process between stakeholders, including Trade Unions, THEA and the Department of Education and Skills regarding Technological Universities. For example, the Department of Education and Skills, in its letters to both the TUI and IMPACT trade unions, in May and July 2017 respectively, has provided assurances around funding to be 'provided to support the development of Technological Universities as part of Budget 2017 which will underpin the next phase of engagement for the four consortiums or to support the development of any future Technological University projects that emerge given their critical importance to the development of the sector' and that 'the Department has outlined during ... discussions that, if the TUI are in a position to suspend their industrial action in relation to Technological Universities, then the Department will be in a more favourable position to put forward a request for significant additional investment during the current Estimates process in the context of Budget 2018 with a view to ensuring that consortia can meet all of the eligibility criteria for designation as a TU as soon as practicable following the implementation of the legislation.

The Minister now proposes to bring forward a number of insertions and amendments to the Technological Universities Bill. These relate to terms and conditions for staff, strengthening the regional remit of a technological university, membership of governing bodies and amendments to the application process for designation as a technological university. It is expected that the Bill, when revised, will be re-introduced at Committee Stage as early as possible in the next Dáil session.

² <https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2017-Press-Releases/PR2017-17-07.html>

The Technological Universities Bill is expected to clearly set out that the mission of TUs is to drive regional development and jobs growth and that Technological Universities must have the scale and capacity to deliver for their stakeholders in areas such as:

- Delivering a range of disciplines and levels of qualification, including apprenticeships, to meet the skills needs of the regions, retain talent in the regions and contribute to national priorities.
- Effectively supporting lifelong learning, upskilling and reskilling to support career development for citizens throughout their lives.
- Internationalisation activities including attracting more international students and increasing mobility opportunities for Irish students and staff.
- Creating the capacity for greater engagement with local enterprises, particularly SMEs. Supporting innovation, management upskilling and internationalisation of companies.
- Undertaking globally significant research and innovation that supports competitiveness and nurtures new business ideas; creating a regional research capacity.
- Attraction, retention and development of enterprise in the regions.
- A greater capacity for social and community engagements that would include placements, research and innovation, work with schools, cultural and sporting activities.
- Increased national and international influence and visibility with a single coherent university brand.

The HEA has devised this 2017 call so as to both be mindful of clear Government policy to support the development of landscape and TU projects, while at the same time ensuring that there is appropriate accountability and value for money in respect of funding to be allocated. The call requires that those making a submission should set out progress to date (where relevant), expected costs and milestones for each phase of the proposed project along with an overall cost and expected completion date in order to demonstrate a long term strategic approach to landscape reform.

Criteria

In allocating funding, the HEA will have regard to the following criteria:

- Scale of the project – e.g. numbers of students, staff, affected by the reform;
- Level of co-funding provided by institutions;
- Track record of success in the development of the project to date. This might include:
 - Previous institutional funding allocated;
 - Significant milestones achieved;
 - Progress on project plans as provided under the 2015/16 landscape reconfiguration funding round;
 - Evidence of quality improvements and/or capacity improvements and/or of cost efficiencies achieved in the process to date; and,
 - Costs and expenditure to date.

Format of submissions

Institutions/Consortia are asked to complete the attached template having regard to the following format in making submissions.

Section 1 Strategy and objectives

Institutions should set out:

- Alignment with national strategy;
- Specific objectives and indicators of success for the funding sought.

Section 2 Funding sought

Institutions should set out the funding being sought in the application and the purposes for which it is proposed.

Institutions should also provide an annualised estimate of the total cost of the overall plan.

Insofar as the institution envisages that further costs, which are not being sought as part of this plan, will arise, the institution should provide details of same along with an indication of how these future costs might be met.

Section 3 Co-funding being provided

Institutions should set out the funding they propose to provide for the project in question.

Closing date

Submissions should be received by the HEA in electronic format before 5pm, Thursday, October 26th, 2017 (sfitzgerald@hea.ie). A signed / hard copy is not required.

External assistance

The HEA may seek external assistance in assessing any submissions made.

Eligible institutions

Landscape Reform or Technological University Consortia, including, but not limited to:

- a) NUIG/ St. Angela's College, Sligo
- b) DCU/ St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra/ Mater Dei Institute of Education
- c) DIT/ IT Blanchardstown/ IT Tallaght
- d) Cork IT/ IT Tralee
- e) Waterford IT/ IT Carlow
- f) IT Sligo/ Letterkenny IT/ Galway-Mayo IT

Applications under this call will also be accepted from any of the above landscape reform or technological university consortia which have been, or propose to be, expanded to include new partners.

HEA, 10th October 2017