

FAQ: Technological Sector Advancement Fund (TSAF)

1. Sectoral Applications

1.1) The Documentation suggests that you would welcome 'sectoral level' applications. However, the application form does not permit that.

As per the [Call Document](#): *“Institutions wishing to participate in a consortium application should notify the HEA prior to the submission deadline and no later than 7th September 2023. A separate application template for sectoral applications will be provided for completion.”*

Any queries relating to a sectoral application should be submitted to systemperformance@hea.ie prior to **7 September 2023**.

1.2) In regard to the potential for a sectoral proposal bid, specifically the scale of the application, would 2 or 3 partners with a shared interest constitute a sectoral bid or would you expect the majority of eligible organisations to be included.

As noted in the call documentation, applications for funding at a sectoral level are encouraged. Institutions considering a consortium application should contact the HEA before 7th September regarding their intention to submit a sector-level application (systemperformance@hea.ie). While it is not mandatory for sector-level applications to include all eligible institutions for TSAF, consortium applications will be required to demonstrate the strategic value of the project for the technological sector's advancement and the participating institutions. Additionally, a separate application template will be provided for sectoral applications.

1.3) Are presidential e-signatures on the sectoral proposals accepted?

Yes. The TSAF application allows for e-signatures, noting that each president confirms to have read and understood the application document and declares that the particulars supplied in this application are true and correct.

1.4) Are other HEIs outside the sector as 'associated partners' eligible under TSAF? Can any proposed project contribute towards some of the costs they incur (on the same cost-share basis that applies within the project)?

An application may propose activities with partner organisations including, for example, another HEI. The application should make clear how the partner organisation will be involved in, and make a significant contribution to, a project activity. Where funding is provided, the applicant (or lead applicant in sectoral applications) assumes full responsibility for the appropriate management of the award in its entirety. A formal agreement should be put in place between the applicant and the partner organisation in advance of the activity commencing to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place in relation to the use of, and reporting on, project funds. This would include, but is not limited to, the maintenance of supporting documentation and reporting of progress and expenditure.

2. Institutional Applications

2.1) In preparing a budget for the TSAF application, should they be presented on the basis of a calendar year or academic year?

As noted in the Call Document, the grant commences on 1 January 2024. Furthermore, it also states (p. 7): “*Project budgets should present the total funding required over the 30 months of the scheme.*” Project budgets should therefore be prepared on a calendar year basis with the date of commencement being 1 January 2024.

2.2) If an institution is looking to include costs in ‘digital infrastructure’, how does it differentiate between this cost category and ‘infrastructure costs’ in the application?

As per Table 1: Eligible Costs in the TSAF Call Document (p. 5) digital infrastructure is eligible to institutions under the ‘Data and Systems’ cost category. This is considered to cover aspects specifically relating to digital activities. General infrastructure costs are viewed as entirely separate and therefore ineligible.

2.3) The Documentation notes that infrastructural costs are ineligible. Are low-cost items such as software or laptop equipment included in this category?

As per Table 1: Eligible Costs in the TSAF Call Document (p. 5), digital infrastructure costs may be proposed under the 'Data and Systems' cost category.

Small equipment (i.e., single items with a value under €10k including VAT) deemed necessary for assisting in project activities may also be proposed as part of the application. Applicants are advised to provide detail on small equipment costs proposed in their application. Additionally, there must be a clear justification as to why these costs are necessary in order for the project to implement deliverables and that such a facility is not available through alternative means to the institution.

2.4) Under the items cited for eligible costs in the TSAF call document there is provision for stipends for research students before 31 August 2022. How should institutions considering this option budget under this category, noting the potential for stipends to be increased?

Institutions seeking to apply for funding for stipends for PhD students who are already enrolled may build contingency into project budgets to manage any increase to the stipend. Applications should clearly state the level of contingency applied.

2.5) Can the application for the TSAF include a research element (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups etc.) to ensure a proposed activity is fully developed by the time of its completion?

Preparatory activities, such as scoping exercises to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of an activity may be proposed as part of the application. Such preparatory elements may be costed to the cost category relevant to the activity (see TSAF Call Document Table 1: Eligible Costs, p. 5). Details of all project activities should be provided as part of the application.

2.6) Is there any guidance regarding the percentage of institutional co-funding expected per work package or in the overall application?

The appropriate level of co-funding is a matter for the institution to determine based on the activities proposed and institution's context. As per the call document, the TSAF is designed to provide a contribution towards the costs of an institution's proposed activities and the fund has an emphasis on supporting the technological sector to be enabled in terms of sustainability and self-sufficiency. To this end, consideration of the level of institutional co-funding and consideration of project sustainability, including plans to mainstream activities, will be considered as part of the assessment process (see TSAF Call Document, Section 7: Assessment Process, pp. 9-10).

2.7) Are other HEIs outside the sector as 'associated partners' eligible under TSAF? Can any proposed project contribute towards some of the costs they incur (on the same cost-share basis that applies within the project)?

An application may propose activities with partner organisations including, for example, another HEI. The application should make clear how the partner organisation will be involved in, and make a significant contribution to, a project activity. Where funding is provided, the applicant (or lead applicant in sectoral applications) assumes full responsibility for the appropriate management of the award in its entirety. A formal agreement should be put in place between the applicant and the partner organisation in advance of the activity commencing to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place in relation to the use of, and reporting on, project funds. This would include, but is not limited to, the maintenance of supporting documentation and reporting of progress and expenditure.