

TTSI3 Pipeline Fund (TPF)

Principles and Guidelines 2020 (abridged)

The objective of the TPF is to increase the early stage pipeline of opportunities that may be further developed towards new spin-out companies; to increase the number of researchers engaging in commercialisation and; to develop understanding and good practice in the TTOs of opportunity development for proof of concept-type funds.

The objective of the TPF is to increase the early stage pipeline of opportunities that may be further developed towards new spin-out companies. Project funding is available to aid early stage assessment of such opportunities and to position them for follow-on funding (e.g. through Enterprise Ireland CFF or CF, or other sources of proof of concept funding) and to encourage more researchers to engage in commercialisation.

A TTSI3 Pipeline Fund award will be made to a grouping of HEIs, led by their TTOs, in order to convene a TPF Committee (TPFC). The primary function of the TPFC will be to allocate investment funding to eligible submitted projects.

This document sets out the principles for the Fund and guidelines as to how it will be operated and how assessment will be made. The aim is to allow for a speedy commencement of the programme and variation, other than in respect of practical details, is not expected.

In summary:

- Up to €15k per project may be awarded.
- Projects must be completed within 6 months of the start date and all projects must be completed by the end of 2020.
- Awards are decided by the TPF Committee (TPFC) and recommended to KTI for funding
- The TPFC and KTI will act swiftly to allow the Fund to be deployed in a timely manner

TPFC ROLE & COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Role of the TPFC

The role of the TPFC is:

- To review opportunities and recommend allocation of funding for eligible submitted projects in accordance with the objectives and criteria for the TPF to KTI for approval
- To evaluate performance of the portfolio of invested projects
- To report to KTI on the investments made and the progress of those projects and to submit required TPF reports as set out further below.
- To ensure the minutes of TPFC meetings are maintained and shared in a timely manner with all TPFC Members.
- To keep detailed records of funding decisions, tracking of projects and allocation of funds

DECISION MAKING AND APPROVAL PROCESSES

PROJECT SUBMISSIONS

Project submissions are to be made to the TPFC in accordance with the following terms:

- Submission of project applications to the TPFC shall be received by the TPF Project Manager at least ten days working days prior to the date scheduled for the TPFC meeting.
- Project applications will be circulated to all TPFC Members by the Project Manager at least (and no later than) five working days prior to the date scheduled for the TPFC meeting.
- Requests for more information can be made prior to the TPFC meeting where appropriate.
- The TPFC will consider each application and whether it fulfils the criteria and how that application fits with the TPFC Objectives. The template evaluation form (at Appendix 1) will be completed by the Project Manager on behalf of the TPFC for each application as it is assessed.
- The TPFC will respond to each application in one of the following ways:
 - Decline funding
 - Funding approved subject to conditions defined by the TPFC.
 - Funding approved.
- Funding for any project, whether requiring TPFC approval or not, must be confirmed by KTI in writing, including the level of funding and the project start and end dates.

- The Project Manager shall submit to KTI within five working days following the TPFC Meeting the recommendations for funding along with a summary of the rationale for the decision reached and the application and any submitted supporting documentation.
- KTI shall respond with its approval, or otherwise, within five working days of receiving the complete information.
- Where funding is approved, the TPF Project Manager will record same and notify the submitting organisation within five working days of notification from KTI along with any other special conditions associated with that investment.
- In order to comply with timelines, the Project Manager shall agree dates for submissions, TPFC meeting and submission of recommendations at least one month in advance of the proposed application submission date.

The process of selection of opportunities by the TTOs to bring to the TPF committee and the preparation and presentation of those opportunities are expected to be part of the learning outcomes from the programme. The consortium is expected to develop a professional approach to this and to set and agree a quality bar. There should be critical feedback built into the committee meetings so that all HEI staff participating understand what good looks like – not just in terms of a quality opportunity but in terms of how it is presented and how it has been pre-selected.

OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

When considering a new opportunity there are three main areas the TPFC considers:

- Eligibility
- Viability
- Outcome

For a project to be funded it must adequately satisfy all of these criteria. The Assessment Criteria Checklist to be used is at Appendix 1.

BUDGET AND PAYMENTS

Eligible expenses

Funding of TPF projects is designed to generate sufficient preliminary data in order to establish the viability of an approach before seeking more substantial funding (e.g. Commercial Feasibility Fund,

Commercialisation Fund). This may include e.g. further developing the scope of an invention, additional experimentation aimed at strengthening intellectual property by providing critically important exemplification data. Funding under the TPF is not intended to duplicate any existing funds such as CFF or CF.

Eligible expenses relate to the direct costs of undertaking the project: costs of further developing the scope of an invention, costs of undertaking proof of concept study, additional experimentation aimed at strengthening intellectual property by providing critically important exemplification data, external research associated with developing the business proposition (excluding market research which is available under the CFF).

Excluded costs:

- Overheads
- Legal fees, including patent and IP protection costs
- Marketing/Sales
- Conference, trade shows and travel
- Research costs incurred prior to the commencement date
- Capital equipment
- Training
- Mentoring

APPENDIX 1: TPFC Assessment Criteria Checklist

The following table contains the criteria that the TPFC will use to assess projects.

ASSESSMENT SHEET				
FOR TPFC MEETING:				
PROJECT NAME:				
HEI:				
RESEARCHERS:				
PROJECT MANAGER:				
Criteria		Detail		Yes/No
Eligibility	TPF Eligible	The project must be consistent with the eligibility criteria for TPF and an appropriate use of public funding	Derived from publicly funded research in Ireland	
			Project is working towards: further developing the scope of an invention, proof of concept, additional experimentation aimed at strengthening intellectual property by providing critically important exemplification data, external research associated with developing the business proposition (excluding market research which is available under the CFF).	
			Potential to create or enhance a knowledge or technology competitive advantage for Ireland.	
			TPF eligible expenses may include: Costs of undertaking PoC study; additional experimentation aimed at strengthening intellectual property by providing critically important exemplification data; external research associated with developing business proposition (excluding market research which is available under the CFF). Ineligible expenses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IP and patent costs; Overheads; Legal fees; Marketing/Sales; Conference, trade shows and travel; Research costs incurred prior to the commencement date; Capital equipment; Training; Mentoring; any other costs that should be met under TTS13 core programme; costs that could be met under the EI CFF 	
	Additionality	TPF investment is enabling or accelerating outcomes greater than what would otherwise happen.		
Viability	Market Need	There is evidence that there is a need for the opportunity in the market place	Demonstrated novelty of the technology or expertise	
			"Does anyone want this?" Evidence of market need/market pain. Show that there is some interest from the market/potential business partners/investors	
			"Who's the competition?" Initial competitor assessment	
			"What's the likely USP?" Describe the unique selling proposition (USP) for this project when compared to other products/offering	

	Realistic Plan	The budget and milestone plan must be clear and realistic.	There is a clear project plan with milestones	
			The expertise required is detailed, costed and source identified	
			External resources required are detailed and costed	
			The project is likely to deliver in the timeframe required	
			The project and outputs are achievable	
			A TTO project manager has been identified	
Outcome	Anticipated outcome	The outcome from this project must be described and have a likely chance of leading to a spin-out.	The outcome of this project is clearly described	
			The next steps in development of the opportunity, including funding sources, are clearly anticipated	
			The criteria for go/no go decision are adequately described	
			The potential route(s) to market is/are described	
			The TPF will position the opportunity to achieve further funding and engagement leading to a potential new spin-out company	
RECOMMENDATION				
TPFC MEETING:				
PROJECT NAME:				
HEI:				
RESEARCHERS:				
PROJECT MANAGER:				
FUND	Yes	No	Conditional	If conditional, explain what requires to be done next
TPFC summary of why this recommendation was reached				