

# MaynoothWorks Proof of Concept Seed Fund Call

## Call objective

MaynoothWorks is launching a pilot Proof of Concept Seed Fund call. The objective of this initiative is to fund and increase the early-stage pipeline of opportunities with commercial potential that may be further developed towards innovative products or services. The PoC will fund the initial demonstration of innovative ideas addressing societal, economic, environmental or industrial challenges which may show commercial potential. The call is open to all Maynooth University academics and is open to all thematic areas and faculties.

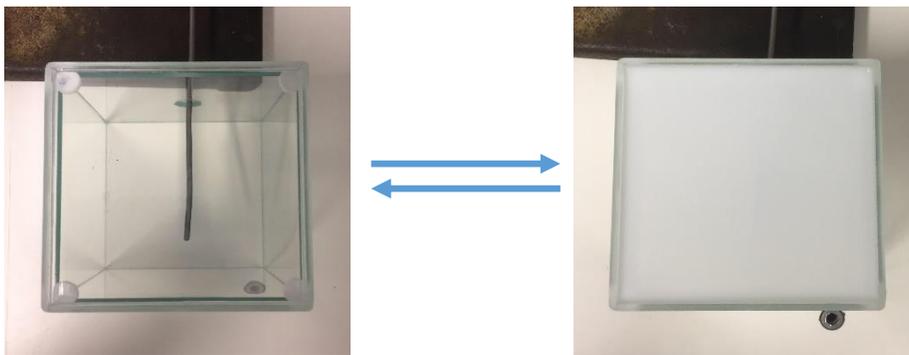
## Example projects

*The below description is an exemplar proof of concept project. These are usually short, sharp experiments, which will address a single question. The funding required for such experiments is usually around €5,000-€10,000 with a max budget of €15,000. The project's length should be no longer than 4 months.*

A well-known, off-the-shelf polymer mixed with salty water forms a transparent gel that “freezes” when warmed up, and “melts” when cooled down again. Over a period of time, the mixture’s behaviour was investigated to identify exactly how and why the process occurred, and how it might be controlled.

Tomato and pepper farmers in Spain grow in greenhouses, giving them an effective 10-month growing season. However, in summer these facilities get very hot, leaving plants at risk of scorch and sun damage which can destroy 30% of total yield. The present state of the art is active air conditioning which imposes high energy (and thus economic and climate) costs; lower-tech solutions involve chalk-based paints which restrict all light, limiting the number of effective growing hours per day.

Using a tabletop test greenhouse and some basic sensors, the team were able to demonstrate that a carefully-tailored polymer gel blend could be incorporated into a film which passively controlled the internal conditions, triggering at the optimum temperature for plant growth. The team have spun out [Albotherm Ltd](#) to take the product to market, and raised in excess of €600,000 to support their efforts.



*The original Albotherm laboratory demonstration*

## Fund award

Total funding available for this pilot seed fund call is €50,000. Individual funding awards are available in the range of €5,000 - €15,000. Each award will be provided in one tranche to a single business unit. A journal report of expenditure for this award and other relevant evidence must be provided as a part of a final project report. Unspent funds will need to be returned to MaynoothWorks.

## Terms and conditions

- Applications can only be made through the online portal available
- Assessment, scoring and feedback for all applications will be completed by the MaynoothWorks team, alongside assessors from within the University: applications will be awarded funding in order of quality. Award of funding will cease when the total available budget has been allocated, but high quality applications that remain unfunded will still receive support from MaynoothWorks towards alternative resources.
- Applications should be tailored to address the specific points highlighted in the form guidance.
- Online submission deadline is 4th Nov 2022; late applications will not be accepted.
- Notification of application outcome will be provided by email to the lead applicant.
- Feedback and reviewers' comments will be provided to all applicants.
- Funding decisions will be final.
- Funding of up to €15,000 per project can be requested (inclusive of any VAT or taxes): costs must be justified with links to exemplar pricing or quotes for substantial purchases.
- The fund is open to all disciplines in the University and must be led by an academic, although other contributors may be credited during the application.
- Multi-disciplinary projects are encouraged but are not a requirement: cross-faculty or -department proposals are welcomed but must be led by a single named candidate.
- Applicants may only lead one application in this round of the fund but may collaborate on any number.
- Funding should be used to demonstrate and/or assess the technical viability of a potentially commercial project.
- Projects must be completed within 4 months of the start date.
- All expenditure must be procurement compliant with MU and national policies.

## Eligible costs (list not exhaustive)

- Experimental consumables
- Chemicals and reagents
- Prototyping materials and services
- Small equipment purchases or rental of larger items
- Survey or focus group administration
- HPC or related computational time (e.g. AWS)

## Non-eligible costs (list not exhaustive)

- Salaries or buy out of time
- Overheads
- Conference, trade shows, and travel
- Research costs incurred prior to the commencement date
- Capital equipment
- Training or mentoring
- Article publication costs

Updated 4<sup>th</sup> Oct 2022