



An Roinn Caiteachais
Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe
Department of Public
Expenditure and Reform

Public Service Innovation Fund 2020 Call for Projects

Information Guide



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Details of Scheme

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) is seeking applications to fund projects and initiatives in public service bodies that are innovative in nature under the Public Service Innovation Fund. This is a competitive fund which was first piloted in 2019.

We are looking to help fund projects that:

- can help add value to your organisation and make what you do better for the user/public;
- demonstrate new ways of working and help deliver your organisation's strategic outcomes;
- implement approaches and ideas that can be spread elsewhere or help to create learnings for other public servants from experimentation;
- encourage cross-organisational or cross-silo working and show commitment from your organisation to innovation;
- use evidence, insights and data to drive innovation or seek to create evidence and data for future innovations.

The minimum level of funding available per individual proposal from DPER is €10,000 up to a general ceiling of €50,000. However, in exceptionally strong cases, funding above €50,000 may be granted subject to a maximum of €100,000 from DPER to fund any one project. Contributory or match funding from applicant bodies (or other collaborating bodies) is permitted and encouraged (subject to compliance with all laws and expenditure/procurement rules).

Applications must be submitted online at www.ops2020.gov.ie/funding.

The deadline for applications to be submitted is 12:00 noon, 26th February 2020.

A. Background

In 2018 the European Commission's Structural Reform Support Service examined Ireland's Public Service innovation maturity level. This assessment indicated that innovation in Ireland's Public Service is patchy and, while there are excellent 'pockets' of innovation in areas of the public service, a more systemic and strategic approach to innovation is required if Ireland is to become a world-leader in public service innovation.

One of the recommendations in the Structural Reform Support Service ("SRSS") report was to develop an innovation fund and, as part of its implementation, to track performance and results that followed.

Furthermore, as part of the implementation of *Our Public Service 2020*, an Action Team of public service innovation experts was established and is being led by the Secretary General of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the CEO of Enterprise Ireland. This group had recommended a number of initiatives to help boost a culture of innovation in the Irish Public Service, one of which was to trial an innovation fund.

The Reform and Delivery Office in DPER subsequently secured funding for this key innovation initiative and the pilot fund was launched in May 2019. A public service innovation team was established in DPER mid-2019 and made up of seconded public servants from a number of sectors. This team is responsible for developing and delivering various initiatives to promote an innovation culture in the public service, including the delivery of the innovation fund.

The pilot innovation fund has supported 18 diverse projects from across all sectors of the public service. Details of projects funded in 2019 can be found [here](#).

B. Purpose of the Innovation Fund

This fund seeks to encourage public service bodies to promote a culture of innovation in their organisations and to propose fresh ideas and new ways of working that might not otherwise be supported into being. Public servants are encouraged to think imaginatively about how they approach risk and explore the benefits of working with new and different partners in delivering their services and programmes to the public or other organisations.

It is important that projects supported are aligned with organisational strategies. The overarching goal of *Our Public Service 2020*, the Government's Public Service Innovation and Development Framework, is to deliver better outcomes for the public and to support public service organisations to be resilient and agile.

The fund also seeks to complement existing strategies that seek to position Ireland in a more favourable global standing. This includes existing strategies such as *Our Public Service 2020*, *Future Jobs Ireland*, *Innovation 2020*, *eGovernment Strategy*, *Civil Service Renewal Plan*, *Public Service ICT Strategy* and the *Climate Action Plan*.

C. Types of Application Being Sought

Innovation is the creation of a new, viable offering that adds value. The notion of adding value is particularly important in public service innovation.

Value can be achieved in a number of ways, for example: through a better or more impactful service/product, a more customer-centric approach to service delivery, generation of efficiencies, better use of insights, data or evidence, etc.

Applications are being sought in relation to projects or initiatives that feature some or all of the following characteristics:

C.1 Value, Outcomes and User Impact

Initiatives and projects are sought that can bring greater value to your organisation and/or make public services more impactful for the user. This might include:

- a better user experience;
- a reduction in time-burden or expense to the customer;
- improved and more effective or higher quality service;
- increased efficiencies/a reduction in costs to the organisation;
- streamlined, clearer or more accessible information for the public;
- greater availability of open or re-usable data;
- optimisation of the time spent providing a service or delivering a product;
- a simplified or more intuitive service or product that prevents queries and unnecessary follow-up; or
- a better experience for the staff member(s) providing the service.

C.2 Novelty

Projects and initiatives are sought that demonstrate an element of originality for your organisation and also align with the outcomes your organisation seeks to achieve. Novelty means new to your organisation or area of work and should not be confused with 'invention' which means new to the world (although invention is welcomed too). This may involve new ways of working which:

- use methods and approaches that are based on customer feedback loops, survey information or data from users/customers;
- adopt and interrogate previously unknown or unused datasets;
- invite experimentation, testing and iteration;
- involve better employee engagement or cross-silo working;
- adopt different approaches to creating or conceptualising policy (e.g. user-centricity, design thinking, behavioural economics); or
- employ new and emerging technologies, tools or methodologies in relation to the delivery of public services (e.g. robotic process automation, Blockchain/distributed ledger technology, artificial intelligence, wearables, 3D printing, augmented/virtual reality, sensors, internet of things etc.).

C.3 Transferability, Scalability and Learning

This innovation fund seeks to further embed a culture of innovation and knowledge-sharing across the public service. Projects that have the potential to transfer/scale will help to drive learning and encourage change. Applications are particularly welcome where:

- the principle underlying your innovation can be demonstrated to other public service bodies to encourage them to think differently about their own services;
- insights from the project can be shared - even where the project was not successful - so that others can learn from your initiative;
- the innovation can be adapted or adopted elsewhere within your own organisation, other organisations in your sector or somewhere else in the public service;
- new ways of learning and capacity-building for our staff can be achieved (e.g. experiential learning, user-centric design, design-thinking, the innovation process); or;
- the innovation, as a pilot, can be fully scaled up or transferred out (at organisational, sectoral or public-service-wide level).

C.4 Collaboration with Other Organisations

Collaboration and/or involvement of other public, private or voluntary bodies/organisations is encouraged. This might include initiatives or projects that:

- involve new or unusual partnerships and collaborations;
- break down traditional silos; or
- encourage new ways of working across the public service.

C.5 Evidence-Base

Projects and initiatives should, amongst other things, seek to improve a situation, tackle a challenge or exploit an opportunity, solve (or contribute to solving) a known problem, address a currently unmet need or create the evidence base to investigate whether a problem exists. Applications are particularly welcome that:

- can clearly show what evidence will be used before the project commences to assess the 'as is';
- can explain what data will be used to show where change has been effected;
- can identify how success will be measured;
- create new, or enhance current, indicators and metrics;
- create new datasets or evidence sources that can be used for business decisions or that can help the organisation to understand issues and identify trends.

C.6 Procurement Plan and Contribution of the Recipient Organisation

Organisations awarded funding under the innovation fund must be in a position to complete project procurement (where this is required) in 2020. **Funds must be drawn down fully in 2020 as this is a central government programme.**

Applications are particularly welcome that clearly signal a commitment from your organisation to support your innovation and change through some element of contribution such as:

- a commitment from the applicant organisation or another body to provide match-funding;
- a commitment to assigning staff resources to see the project through to completion (including a commitment that others in the organisation will support the project).

D. Eligibility

The scheme is open to Irish Public Service Bodies only.

A public service body includes any statutory body or company or body corporate (or subsidiary) established and financed wholly or partly by a Minister (whether by share issue or guaranteed loan or money provided) in respect of which a public service pension scheme exists or applies or may be made. **Commercial State bodies are not considered to be part of the public service.**

This scheme is not to be considered a substitute source of funding for proposals that should be 'business as usual' for a public service organisation. Where other sources of funding have been identified, DPER may consult the parties involved in relation to this scheme to ensure alignment and avoidance of duplication.

E. Funding Available

The **minimum level of funding** available per individual proposal is **€10,000** up to a **maximum of €50,000**. However, please note that in exceptionally strong cases, funding above €50,000 will be granted subject to a maximum of €100,000 for any one project.

The total amount of the Innovation Fund in 2020 is €1 million.

F. Oversight of Scheme

Administration of the scheme will be overseen by the Public Service Innovation Team in the Reform and Delivery Office of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in line with DPER Circular 13/2014 (The Management of Accountability for Grants for Exchequer Funds), the Public Spending Code and Public Procurement procedures generally.

Once a grant has been awarded, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform will pay the grant to the lead public body that can then commission a provider using acceptable channels (for example a firm that is developing a smartphone application, or 'app').

The public body that has commissioned the service will account for how the grant has been spent to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. That public body or department will have to satisfy itself that the payee delivering the service has met the relevant contractual conditions.

The accounting system and organisational arrangements of the service provider must be understood and be deemed adequate by the public body, taking account of the level of the grant payment, to ensure the proper administration of the money.

There will be an expectation of knowledge-sharing following the project's completion. This may include a post-project evaluation.

Such evaluations will enable DPER to assess the sustainability of projects and identify opportunities to replicate and appropriately 'scale-up' a project, maximising its impact. It will also test assumptions made in preparing applications and help improve project selection in later rounds of applications to the Fund.

F. (i) Circular 13/2014

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is administering a grant scheme and DPER Circular 13/2014 *'Management and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds'* applies to this funding.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department or public body commissioning the service will complete a relevant checklist.

F (ii) Memorandum of Agreement

Successful applicants will be required to sign a memorandum of agreement (MOA) which will detail the nature, quality, and scope of the proposal being supported. Each MoA will outline the principles, aims and objectives of the project and include general requirements as well as deliverables specific to your proposal.

Should your funding application be successful, the head of your organisation (Secretary General, Chief Executive, Director General or equivalent) will be required to sign the MOA between your organisation and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The MoA may take account of the following, as is appropriate and proportionate:

(a) Objective	(h) No Automatic Payment
(b) Terms and Conditions	(i) Retention of end-year balances
(c) Service Level Agreement (SLA)	(j) Once-off Grants
(d) Monitoring and Reporting	(k) Administrative and Control Requirements
(e) Inspection	(l) Multiple Funding
(f) Payment	(m) Onward payments of grants
(g) Advance Payment	(n) Protecting State investment (<i>including retention of Intellectual Property rights</i>)

The Public Service Innovation Team will work closely with successful applicants to ensure messaging and branding around projects is aligned overall with the *Our Public Service 2020* programme.

Evaluation and Application Process

It is important that this scheme is both transparent and rigorous in how proposals are selected and evaluated. The stages of the evaluation process are set out below.

Eligibility Check

When we receive your application, we will first check whether your proposal is eligible against the pre-qualifying conditions outlined below.

If your application is regarded as ineligible, this means that it will not be processed any further. You will however be notified and given an explanation.

The Public Service Innovation Team will carry out a pre-qualification check. Your application form will be checked against the following:

- Adherence to the innovation theme (i.e., does it reflect the types of applications being sought above?)
- Timeline (i.e., is the timeline practical and achievable?)
- Deliverables and outcomes (i.e., are deliverables/outcomes clearly set out?)
- Budget (i.e., is the required budget clearly laid out, justified and reasonable?)
- Public Service Body (i.e., is the application from an entity that DPER is satisfied qualifies **for the purpose of this scheme only** as a Public Service Body)
- Senior sponsorship (i.e., has the application been endorsed by a senior leader in the organisation to enable success of the project?)

Your application will not be shortlisted for further consideration if there is concern that the proposal does not sufficiently address the above conditions. If your application is unsuccessful at the pre-qualification check stage, we will notify you and explain our decision.

If we are broadly satisfied with the proposal but have queries about any aspects of delivery, we may decide at this stage to ask you for further information.

First-Stage Evaluation

If we consider that your application meets the above conditions, it will then be forwarded to first-stage evaluation which consists of a panel of evaluators from across the public service and the private sector.

The following assessment criteria will be used by the panel to evaluate your proposal. These are outlined under C1- C6 above.

1. **Value, outcomes and user impact (30 marks)**
2. **Novelty (20 marks)**
3. **Transferability, Scalability and learning (15 marks)**
4. **Collaboration with other organisations (15 marks)**
5. **Evidence-base for application (10 marks)**
6. **Procurement plan and contribution of the recipient organisation (10 marks)**

A proposal will be given a percentage of the marks available under each heading.

Description	% of marks available
Fail: the proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed	0-9%
Poor: the proposal inadequately addressed criterion or shows serious inherent weaknesses	10-39%
Fair: the proposal broadly addresses the criterion but there are significant weaknesses	40-59%
Good: the proposal addresses the criterion well but with a number of shortcomings	60-69%
Very good: the proposal addresses all the criterion with a small number of shortcomings	70-84%
Excellent: the proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion	85-100%

Final-Stage Evaluation

On the basis of the first-stage evaluation, a number of projects will be shortlisted and will move to final-stage evaluation. Final-stage evaluation will consist of a panel of senior experts from the public service and private sector and chaired by the Assistant Secretary with responsibility for Public Service Reform in DPER.

This panel will make the decision on the portfolio of projects to be funded and the decision of the panel is final.

A list of the successful projects will be notified to the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform for information.

Funding Offer

If you are awarded funding, you will be issued with a letter of offer and a draft Memorandum of Agreement for completion by you and signed by the head of your organisation. This may require further discussion between the Public Service Innovation Team and the successful applicant.

We will ask you to acknowledge and accept your offer within a certain timeframe (approx. 2 weeks). Funding recipients must accept the standard conditions contained within the Memorandum of Agreement.

If your application is unsuccessful, you will be issued with a letter explaining the decision.

Amendment of Terms and Conditions

DPER reserves the right to amend and/or change the scope of this scheme and the evaluation process at any time giving due notice to applicants.

The Application Process

Applications must be submitted online at www.ops2020.gov.ie/funding.

The deadline for applications to be submitted is 12:00 noon, 26th February 2020.

Collaboration is encouraged and joint applications will be accepted with one lead body taking responsibility as grantee.

There must be one named key point of contact within the public body involved in the project.

Project applications should be approved in advance by a senior manager in your Public Service Body (e.g. Assistant National Director (HSE), Head of Function/Director of Service (other health areas), Principal Officer, CEO/Director of a State Agency, Chief Superintendent, Colonel/Naval Ship Captain, Director of Services/Executive Manager (Local Government), Prison Governor, School Principal etc.).

Further information:

If you have any queries about this scheme or about the associated application form, please email innovation@per.gov.ie

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