

Regional OPs 2007-13: Implementation Plan Template¹

Operational Programme	S&E Region OP 2007 - 2013
Priority	Innovation and the Knowledge Economy
Intervention/Theme	Development of Region's RTDI capacity
Sub-Theme	ARE Applied Centres of Excellence
Categorisation Code	02 & 03
ERDF Certifying Body	Department of Finance
Managing Authority	S&E Regional Assembly
Intermediate Body	Enterprise Ireland
Beneficiary Body	Institutes of Technology
Grant Rate	100% to set up for a period of 2 to 4 years
EU Co-financing Rate	40%

Description of the Intervention (including eligible works)

Enterprise Ireland recognises that the Institutes of Technology have a key role to play in developing innovative technologies in collaboration with local industry to deliver maximum industrial impact. The role of the Institutes of Technology in research and development is still a relatively new and evolving one although the Sector is recognised as having developed a track record in industry-relevant and applied research. Significant research expertise in niche areas exists throughout the Sector, and recent years have seen an incremental increase in levels of postgraduate research taking place.

Given the importance of the Institutes of Technology to balanced regional development, the ARE Programme operates on a national basis to provide an opportunity for the Institutes to develop research capability in areas of relevance to industry both regionally and nationally and of strategic importance to the individual college. The benefits may be in the development of the research capabilities of existing companies in the region or the creation of new companies within the region. The programme aims to accelerate the development of start-up companies through a combination of business support services, infrastructure and specialised resources before and during their foundation, and to strengthen the innovation infrastructure linked to Institutes in the regions in order to grow new embedded, high potential, high technology companies.

Objectives

The objectives of the Programme are

- To generate regional economic activity through the creation of a strong applied research base for the Region by bringing together researchers into the Institutes of Technology
- To provide a centre of excellence in applied research capable of exploiting opportunities in science, engineering, and technology to the benefit of the

¹ subject to official sign off on implementation provisions.

Regional and National economy.

- Compete successfully for national and international applied research funding to support a growing applied research presence in the Institute of Technology.

In 2008 Enterprise Ireland restructured the Applied Research Enhancement Programme in order to increase its effectiveness, widen its capacity to enhance the Institutes' research capabilities to benefit regional industry and to provide continued support for existing ARE centres that have successfully demonstrated their capacity to work with industry. Rather than setting up a number of new centres in a one-size fits-all approach, in the longer term it was agreed to take a more strategic approach and establish industry relevant centres on a phased basis. Not all of the colleges are starting on the same level and some need more assistance than others to get their research activities up and running on a level that is sufficient to work with industry. High performing ARE Centres that have proven they have the skills and resources to work with industry will have the opportunity to apply for further support through the ARE+ strand of the Programme.

The restructured ARE programme has 3 strands:

- ARE PIONEER: Provides an opportunity for smaller and more focused centres to be established around new and emerging research groups in the colleges giving them the capacity to engage in R&D with local industry (funding of up to €250k over a 2 year period).
- ARE New Centre Starts: Provides funding for the creation for new ARE centres over 4 years (funding of up to €2m over a 4 year period).
- ARE+: Supports existing high performing ARE centres for up to 4 more years (funding of up to €800k over a 4 year period). A mid-term evaluation of an ARE+ centre will take place in year two. Centres that are under performing will cease to be supported by EI.

Selection Criteria

Proposals will be selected and prioritised for consideration according to the following criteria:-

1. Achievement of balanced regional development. In the 2009 PIONEER Programme prioritisation was given to colleges with no ARE activity provided that they met the other criteria in terms of technology and commercial justification,
2. Achievement of a sectoral balance.
3. Mutual agreement between Enterprise Ireland and the college authority on an appropriate research agenda for the region.

Responsibilities of Intermediate Body

Enterprise Ireland will manage this initiative through the Programme Coordination unit (within the Research & Innovation Business Unit) which, in collaboration with the agency's Policy Department is responsible for the design of the scheme, project selection and related information and publicity. It works closely with the agency's Finance Department in the administration and financial management of payments to the

beneficiary bodies. Enterprise Ireland is responsible for the selection/evaluation processes and ongoing monitoring of projects during the funding period. In so doing, Enterprise Ireland ensures that a clear audit trail exists for external independent auditing of projects.

An administrative agreement is in place between Enterprise Ireland and the Managing Authority setting out the respective roles and responsibilities of each.

Responsibilities of Beneficiary Body

The Enterprise Ireland ARE initiative establishes Centres of Excellence in the Institutes of Technology to engage in R&D. The Institutes perform the scheme's administration and constant monitoring and evaluation of the programme's recipients. The ARE Centres will enhance the research, innovation and capacity to engage in applied R&D and Technology Transfer with industry in the geographical region of the Institutes. The ARE Centres will also promote entrepreneurship and enterprise development and respond to economic needs of the Region.

The Institute's responsibilities will also be in the areas of grant administration, financial management and control, the scoping and submission of applications, the certification of eligible expenditure, compliance with issues such as public procurement & tax clearance along with providing expert advice on commercialisation through the technology transfer office. This support will be provided in conjunction with mirroring support from Enterprise Ireland's Research & Innovation Business Unit.

Contribution to (prioritised) Horizontal Themes

The ARE Programme will raise the applied research capacity of the Institutes of Technology by providing the supports for applied research facilities and staff to engage with industry. The objective is to increase regional economic development in the geographical location of the Institutes.

Gender Equality Principle:

This initiative is a competitive programme whereby awards are made on the merits of individual applications. Thus the gender split within the programme is reflective of the existing gender split within colleges. Applicant colleges will be required to consider equality issues in line with the Equality Authority's guidelines when applying for funding as stated in the programme guide documentation.

Project Selection

The ARE programme has 3 strands: Pioneer, New ARE Centre Start and ARE+

The PIONEER strand operates via an Annual Call and the New Centre Starts operate via an Open Call. ARE+ funding is by invitation only and is only available to existing ARE Centres coming to the end of their initial seed funding. In all strands of the Programme, the ARE Programme team works closely with the applicant Institute, the relevant Technology Directorate and Regional Specialists in Enterprise Ireland.

Selection Process for PIONEER

The PIONEER strand operates via an Annual Call. The PIONEER proposals are reviewed internally by the appropriate Technology Directorate and Industry Sector team and if the evaluations are favourable the applications will be brought to the IRCC with a recommendation for funding.

Selection Process for ARE New Centre Start

The ARE New Centre Start strand runs on an open basis and eligible Institutes are invited to submit Expressions of Interest. The Centre selection process will be initiated by Enterprise Ireland following receipt of the Expressions of Interest (EoI). Expressions of Interest which fail, or are unlikely to satisfy, the selection criteria will be declined. The proposal development phase may be considered in the following stages. Following the EoI and selection of a potential Centre, Enterprise Ireland will offer direct assistance in the relevant technology area to guide the college and the selected research team in the development of the full proposal. The research team prepares the full proposal and presents the proposal to an internal Enterprise Ireland panel for appraisal. Enterprise Ireland may decide to accept and bring the proposal forward to the next development phase or the research team may be required to further develop the submission.

Selection Process for ARE +

Each of the existing ARE Centres will be invited to submit an application for ARE+ funding.

Proposal Evaluation

After submission, the New Centre and ARE+ applications are evaluated by an independent panel made up of academic and industrial experts. The panel will be comprised of at least three experts, drawn from industry and academia, with an independent chairperson. It is envisaged that the chairperson will act for a period of time (probably one year) to ensure consistency in the evaluation process as it is applied across a range of proposals. The independent panel will be supported by relevant Enterprise Ireland personnel.

A site visit also takes place. The site visit provides an opportunity for the research team and the college to present the proposal directly to the evaluators and respond to issues raised by the panel both in advance of the visit and on the day.

If the evaluation is successful the proposal is then brought to the Industry Research & Commercialisation Committee for approval and to the Enterprise Ireland Board if appropriate.

Selection Board Membership (where appropriate) –

The typical composition of the Steering Committee should consist of a nominated Chairperson, at least 2 members from the private sector involved in the targeted technology of the centre, the Enterprise Ireland Regional Manager or representative, a Commercialisation Specialist from EI, one IDA representative, the Institutes Industry Liaison Officer, a Leading Academic from the Institute and a Member of Institutes Governing Body.

Overall approval is sought from Enterprise Ireland’s Industrial Research and Commercialisation Committee (IRCC). This committee is composed of senior members of Enterprise Ireland, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, the Department of Agriculture, the IDA, senior academics and independent industrial experts and members of the business community.

Performance Indicators (including horizontal indicators, where appropriate)

Class	Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term Dec ‘09	Final
Output	1.No of ARE Centres in place/extended	4	9	11
Result	1. No. of industrially focused projects	4	30	50

Financial Management

The gross public expenditure in respect of projects funded under this measure will be provided annually in the estimates of the Implementing Body (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment), from SubHead F1 of the Department’s Vote. Enterprise Ireland draws its funding from the Office of Science, Technology and Innovation of D/ETE. Grants in respect of projects approved under the selection procedures outlined above will be paid to institutions by Enterprise Ireland in arrears, on the basis of certified returns of expenditure. Grants will include the ERDF contribution, which will be reclaimed by the Certifying Authority for the benefit of the Exchequer. Claims, once approved and

certified, in respect of ERDF assistance will be submitted to the Commission by the Certifying Authority (please see flow chart attached).

The final beneficiary will be required to have in place separate accounting arrangements in respect of project expenditure under the sub-measure. Roles and responsibilities will be formally documented at all levels of the control chain, i.e. the Certify Authority, Managing Authority, Intermediate Body and project management. Documentation is required specifying the duties, tasks and implementation arrangements for personnel involved. Written statements of the tasks and responsibilities at each level will document specifically the degree of detail required in assignment and completion of tasks.

Document Retention

In accordance with Article 90 of the General Regulation (EC) 1083/2006, the Intermediate Body and Beneficiary Bodies will ensure that all supporting documents regarding expenditure, verification checks, certification and audits on the interventions concerned are kept available for the EU Commission and Court of Auditors for a period of three years following the closure of the Operational Programme.

Monitoring and Reporting arrangements

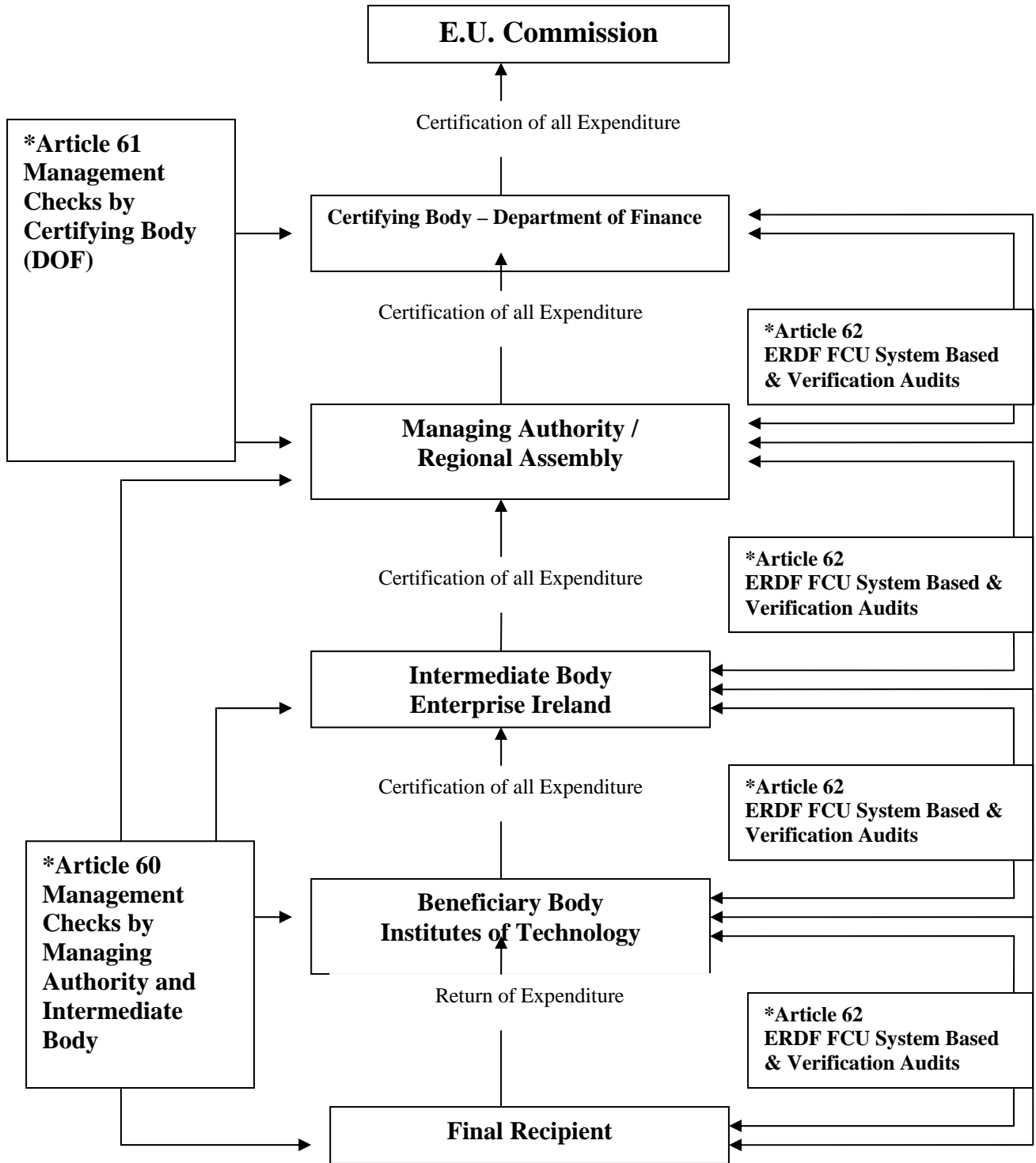
The necessary reports will be provided in the required formats that are to be agreed with the Managing Authority. A dedicated unit within Enterprise Ireland be responsible for the compilation of data and reporting. These actions will be facilitated by a recently upgraded, dedicated IT system.

Information and Publicity

The contribution of the EU Structural Funds 2007-2013 will be acknowledged in all brochures, promotional material, press releases, publicity activity, advertisements, signage, applications forms, annual reports, letters of offer, etc., by use of appropriate logo and text references. A dedicated commercialisation communications unit within Enterprise Ireland will be responsible for continued promotion of the scheme and commercialisation in general. This may include, advertisement campaigns, road shows, and dedicated websites.

North/South Co-operation

ARE Centres engage with industry and 3rd level institutions in the North re collaborative projects in R&D and on consultancy to industry.



* Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006

Annex 2

Steps to gender equality in the 2007 -2013 planning period

Policy development

- ✓ Include gender equality as a policy objective in relevant areas, particularly in human resources measures, community and rural development, business.
- ✓ Undertake gender impact assessment, where appropriate, to ensure that the different needs of women and men are reflected .
- ✓ Work with gender equality experts to identify best practice.
- ✓ Consult with client groups on meeting needs and ensure that both men and women's concerns are addressed;
- ✓ Check if budgets provide for special needs issues such as childcare, transport, etc., and ideally provide some flexibility to ensure that the activity supports Government objectives on gender equality, e.g. be in a position to respond to requests for part-time provision.;
- ✓ Allocate a portion of mainstream budgets for specific actions on gender equality and for innovation;

Monitoring

- ✓ Develop meaningful indicators to track gender equality outcomes, results and impacts.
- ✓ Set gender equality targets where appropriate. These need to be related to the baseline position (not necessarily 50:50)
- ✓ Ensure gender equality is included in all evaluations and surveys.
- ✓ Promote gender balance on relevant committees and, if necessary, allocate a place/places to the unrepresented gender. See Unit's guide: *'How to promote gender balance in decision-making'*

Delivery

- ✓ .Allocate specific responsibility for gender equality to a named individual
- ✓ Ensure gender equality is included in project selection criteria
 - See unit guide *'how to incorporate equal opportunities into project selection criteria'*
- ✓ Promote equality of access for women and men in practical ways by identifying and removing barriers to their participation. e.g.
 - information, publicity and communication
 - flexible provision and delivery
 - childcare supports
 - transport and facilities

- ✓ Put named actions in place to ensure that both women and men will benefit equally;
- ✓ Consider if additional progression supports are needed for particular groups.