

S&E Regional OP 2007 – 2013 Draft Implementation Plan 1.2

Operational Programme	S&E Regional Operational Programme 2007 – 2013
Priority	Innovation & the Knowledge Economy
Theme	Development of the Regions' RTDI Capacity
Sub-Theme	Building the Research Capacity & Capability within Higher Education Institutions
Categorisation Code	01
ERDF Certifying Body	Department of Finance
Managing Authority	S&E Regional Assembly
Intermediate Body	Department of Education and Science
Public Beneficiary Body	Higher Education Authority (HEA)
Grant Rate	Aid will be in accordance with Regional Aid rates 2007 to 2013.
EU Co-financing Rate	40%

Description

The intervention will focus on enhancing the research capacity and capability within the higher education institutions to support its continued development and the translation of knowledge for regional and local development. The sub-theme includes measures comprising the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLTI).

Objectives

The Operational Programme will support the objectives of the Strategy for Science, Innovation and Technology and will –

- Provide high quality and strategically relevant research and capacity in higher education institutions in the region.
- Enhance the collaboration and networking across the higher education institutions so as to optimise return on investment.
- Strengthen the training of researches.
- Strengthen the culture of intellectual proper capture and management among research performers at a laboratory level within regional higher education institutions.

In achieving these objectives due regard will be had at all times for the promotion and safeguarding of cross cutting issues of gender equality and environmental sustainability.

Responsibilities of Intermediate Body

The Intermediate Body in respect of this measure is the Department of Education and Science which works closely with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in discharging some elements of its mandate under this intervention. Responsibilities that are shared with the HEA are flagged in this section of the document.

The Intermediate Body has overall responsibility for procuring resources from Government to enable the undertaking of necessary expenditure associated with this intervention. It is accountable for all State funding expenditure incurred within the sector including expenditure associated with the intervention. Allied responsibilities in this regard include monitoring expenditure throughout the year in the interest of optimising available resources and speedy delivery. Arising from these

actions, the Intermediary Body makes the necessary arrangements for expenditure programmes in each succeeding year having provided initially for discharging contractual liabilities.

For projects with a capital component, the Intermediate Body details procedures that institutions are required to address as part of the needs validation processes. For projects costing in excess of €5m, these include a preliminary appraisal of the need to establish that a sufficiently robust basis exists before proceeding to undertaking more comprehensive needs' assessments including conducting a full cost benefit analysis where the value of the project exceeds €30m.

The Intermediate Body outlines the requirements that institutions accessing State capital under the intervention are required to be addressed at project implementation stage. These include addressing procurement regulations, appropriate forms of contracts to be used, addressing tax requirements (C2 certificates / tax clearance certificates) and publicity requirements.

The Intermediate Body is also responsible for conducting transaction tests of the Public Beneficiary Body as part of the spot checks cascade. The Intermediate Body completes and submits Forms B2 to the Managing Authority to enable the drawdown of aid.

An administrative agreement has been prepared between the Managing Authority and Intermediate Body which sets out in detail the responsibilities of each level. Further sub-delegation to the Public Beneficiary Body will be documented.

Responsibilities of Public Beneficiary Body

The Public Beneficiary Body in respect of this measure is the Higher Education Authority (HEA) which is the body with overall responsibility for the management of all research in higher education institutions under the Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation (SSTI).

The Public Beneficiary Body works closely with the Intermediate Body to determine the shape and details of research measures that come within the ambit of the intervention. Accordingly, following agreement of the scope of a research measure with the Intermediate Body, the Public Beneficiary Body draws up the detailed call for proposals or the governing terms and conditions of the scheme. In doing so, the Public Beneficiary Body details all necessary measures that are required to be addressed as part of the application process as well as detailing the award criteria to be used to aid project selection. In effect, it assumes full responsibility for managing the measure or scheme on behalf of the Intermediate Body and is therefore the first point of contact for universities, institutions of technology and other eligible institutions.

The Public Beneficiary Body is likewise responsible for assessing all applications received in respect of a scheme. In doing so, it is responsible for ensuring that each application addresses prescribed needs validation requirements as appropriate including preparation of a cost benefit analysis for projects with an indicative capital value in excess of €30m. It is responsible for making awards under schemes using predetermined and published award criteria.

It is also charged with keeping the Intermediate Body aware of all significant developments as a scheme evolves including details of awards, anticipated outputs, performance indicators, profiles of anticipated expenditure, and periodic progress reports as required by the Intermediate Body.

Day to day management and execution of projects are devolved to individual institutions with the Public Beneficiary Body monitoring and evaluating progress. Where delays or difficulties may emerge, it liaises with individual institutions to overcome such difficulties.

The Public Beneficiary Body disburses funding that it accesses from the Intermediate Body to institutions and in doing so is required to ensure that the taxation, publicity and procurement matters have been addressed. It performs spot checks as part of the transaction testing cascade and it completes and forwards Forms B 1 to the Intermediate Body to enable the drawdown of ERDF aid.

In respect of the PRTL I the Public Beneficiary Body has overall responsibility for the administration of the programme; including financial management and control, monitoring and evaluation, interim reporting and consideration of horizontal principles.

Contribution to Horizontal Themes

All programmes require proofing having regard for gender equality and environmental sustainability.

In regard to gender equality, at project selection stage the composition of an independent selection committee appointed by the intermediate body to adjudicate on proposals, there is a commitment to ensuring that the Committee is gender balanced. Likewise, institutions are encouraged to have regard for gender equality in the composition of internal assessment boards tasked with formulating institutions proposals. Similarly institutions are encouraged to promote gender equality in the recruitment of researchers.

The EU principle of gender mainstreaming applies and applicants are encouraged to take action to encourage female leads on research projects and shall be required to report the ratios of males to females working on projects. However, evaluation of research proposals is based purely on the scientific and technical merit of proposals. Funded projects are asked to report on the breakdown of male/female researchers engaged in the funded research and this will be reported on.

In relation to environmental sustainability, currently projects deriving capital supports that require local authority planning consents are required to comply fully with all conditions prescribed in the consent. These would usually address some environmental issues including integrating the design of the new facility with the existing built environment, the treatment of surface water and management of waste. Over the period of the measure, consideration will be given to detailing emerging innovative measures that support and promote environmental sustainability. These include employing energy efficiency designs that maximise natural light and ventilation, encouragement of the use of renewable energy sources and reduction in CO₂ emissions.

Project Selection

Selection Process

Research awards under the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTL I) are competitively driven. While the composition of the independent international peer review committee de facto the Selection Committee can vary between PRTL I cycles, the upfront publication of award criteria and marking schemes, the establishment of an independent international peer review team having due regard for gender balance are enduring hallmarks of PRTL I awards. These guiding principles together with openness and transparency are intrinsic to research awards schemes.

The selection process normally occurs in 2 phases. Phase 1 begins with a call for proposals in which institutions are required to:

- Address the institution's overall strategy.
- Provide supplementary statements on the institution's research strategy.
- Complete a template application form outlining the specifics of the proposal.
- Complete a template document addressing national capital appraisal guidelines issues.

Criteria and marking schemes used in determining Phase 1 applications are detailed at the commencement of the process. While there may be change of emphasis over time, broadly, these reflect the following principles:

- The manner in which proposals promote national and regional strategies.
- The alignment of proposals to institutions' overall missions and strategies.

- The extent to which proposals promote knowledge transfer and present commercialisation opportunities and potentialities.
- The past performance of an institution in developing and exploiting research capabilities.
- The level of inter institutional collaboration and resource sharing inherent within proposals.
- The overall benefits and likely impact of proposals.

Following the submission of Phase 1 proposals, preliminary screening occurs to check eligibility and to confirm conformity with the requirements of the call for proposals.

Only those proposals that are judged by a specially convened independent international assessment panel to meet the standards laid down at the start of the process are short listed for advancement to Phase 2. The selection process is interactive to the extent that there are opportunities for feedback and discussion and, where necessary, engagement with experts in specific fields regarding individual specific proposals.

Phase 2 entails institutions providing more relevant and focused information including:

- A detailed implementation programme.
- Sustainability plans for a 7 years period post cessation of funding under the scheme.
- Summary information in template format for strategy; implementation; performance record to date for research, teaching and learning and knowledge transfer.
- Key success indicators and details of how knowledge outputs will be transferred and managed.
- A template detailing compliance with national capital appraisal guidelines including for projects with a capital value in excess of €30m inclusive of private funding, a completed cost benefit analysis.

As in Phase 1, an independent international assessment panel again review and mark Phase 2 proposals using award criteria and a marking scheme detailed from the outset of the process. Specifically, independent international research, teaching / learning peers and experts perform an analysis of the research and teaching / learning elements of the full proposal. Peer reviews involving desk assessment and site visits occur. National research funding bodies with relevant mission and experience in a sectoral research field are consulted where necessary and invited to provide advice on technical aspects of proposals including sustainability plans for requested infrastructure and capacity.

Performance Indicators

Research awards under SSTI are competitive with the result that it is not possible to predict the ultimate destination of investments. The performance indicators are therefore national indicators and should be read in that context.

	2006/2007 Base	End-2009 Target	End-2013 Target
Enhanced collaboration through the development of National Collaborative Programmes	2	8	
An increase in physical infrastructure (work spaces) contributing to meeting SSTI goals			
Work Spaces: New		300	2998
Work Spaces Replacement		350	1071
Provision of new and unique		Development at	Further

<p>infrastructure (specialised facilities) for Ireland Enhanced teaching and learning through the development of Graduate Education Programmes</p>		<p>Mace Head GMP Manufacturing Facilities e-Inis Digital Humanities Observatory</p>	<p>graduate initiatives expected in Cycle 5</p>
<p>The provision of a framework for the development of enhanced graduate programmes will provide a nationally relevant broad skill set of importance to academia, policy and industry in Ireland. The increases proposed in the SSTI and the active encouragement of the professional development of researchers in Ireland, with the aim to see a significant movement into the enterprise sector, underscores the need for a 'graduate school type mechanism' in the country.</p>		<p>Ten out of the sixteen programmes that will be funded under Cycle Four of PRTLTI have a graduate education component.</p>	<p>Continued funding for individually funded graduate researchers</p>

Financial Management

Management of research programmes is fully devolved to the Public Beneficiary Body the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

Following the determination of awards, the HEA notifies the Department of Education and Science of the decisions of the independent international assessment panel. The notification takes the form of a table detailing the name of the beneficiary institutions, title of approved projects, levels of approved capital and recurrent grants.

Institutions are required to provide a definitive statement of expenditure and cash flow projections for all approved projects to the HEA which is relayed to the Department in aggregate form. The Department agrees aggregate expenditure and cash flow profiles with the HEA. The HEA then notifies successful institutions of approval to proceed to programme implementation on the basis of the agreed brief, funding allocation, cost plan, schedule of implementation and related expenditure plans / cash flow for each approved project.

The Department provides the HEA with funding from Exchequer sources in line with the requisitions that are signed by the Secretary /Chief Executive of the HEA. The HEA disburses these payments to institutions in accordance with agreed expenditure profiles and tranching arrangements.

The Public Beneficiary Body is responsible for ensuring that appropriate monitoring arrangements are in place with the successful institutions to ensure compliance with EU regulations, including public procurement and publicity etc. It is mandatory that institutions comply fully with all prescribed requirements relating to EU aid and to provide documentation as requested by the HEA to satisfy such reporting and audit needs.

The Head of each Institution is required to confirm to the HEA that all selected tenders have been chosen in accordance with approved procedures for public/EU aided capital projects and that their acceptance will impose no additional financial liability on the State other than that already approved.

Document Retention

In accordance with Article 90 of the General Regulation (EC) 1083/2006, the Intermediate Body and Public Beneficiary Body 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

All reporting arrangements will be in compliance with the requirements of the Monitoring Committee and the EU Commission.

Information and Publicity

It is the responsibility of the HEA to ensure that institutions observe fully articles 5 to 9 of Commission Regulations (EC) No. 1828/2006 of 8 December 2006.

North/South Co-operation

Opportunities for the promotion of north south co-operation present as follows:

- At project inception stage whereby institutions are encouraged to adopt a collaborative approach with higher education institutions within the island of Ireland.
- Institutions are also encouraged to propose the participation of non higher education Irish research partners including partners from the business sector, non governmental organisations and other stakeholders within the island of Ireland in their proposals.

The programme further encourages international collaboration so as to add value to the research capabilities being established and to support the development of networks that might enable enhanced quality research from Irish researchers.