Technological Sector Advancement Fund (TSAF)

Call document

HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

Contents

Technological Sector Advancement Fund (TSAF)

1. Overview

The Technological Sector Advancement Fund (TSAF) is a €50 million fund providing targeted support for initiatives that are critical to the strategic development of the technological sector. TSAF will contribute towards the cost of maintaining or initiating new activities that are central to an institution delivering on its mission and strategic plan. In this regard, a key objective of TSAF is to support institutions to mainstream activities that have been supported by previous funding streams dedicated to the transformation of the technological sector. TSAF will also make provision for initiatives relating to further landscape reform.

The TSAF, which is provided by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and managed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), builds on significant investment in the technological sector through Landscape Funding, the Technological University Transformation Fund (TUTF), the TU Research and Innovation Supporting Enterprise scheme (TU RISE), which is co-financed by the Government of Ireland and the European Union (EU), and EU-funded National Recovery and Resilience Plan N-TUTORR project. TSAF will compliment these investments by assuring and accelerating the delivery of initiatives that are critically important to the programme of reform underway across the system.

The key objectives of the new fund are to ensure:
- Established TUs will be enabled in terms of sustainability and self-sufficiency.
- Institutions are supported to reach their stated objectives in regard to further landscape reform and the ambitions of the Technological Universities Act 2018.
- A focus on quality, excellence, and capacity building within and across the technological sector.
- Implementation of the recommendations set out in the TURN report and OECD Review of Technological University academic career paths, contracts and organisation in Ireland.

TSAF is a 30-month scheme that will be operated as a managed fund rather than competitive fund to ensure that eligible institutions in the technological sector, which are at different stages of maturity, receive appropriate investment to support their development and success.

The HEA is now formally inviting applications for funding in respect of costs that align with the scope and objectives of TSAF, as set out in this call document. Applications should be made on the TSAF application template and are due for submission to systemperformance@hea.ie no later than **17:00 on 19th October 2023.**

2. Timeline

The indicative timeline for the TSAF funding programme is set out below:

Phase	Date
Application deadline	19th October 2023
Appraisal	October/November 2023
Notification of Outcome	December 2023
Agreement and payments	December 2023
Grant commencement	1st January 2024
Grant end date	30th June 2026

3. Eligible institutions

The following institutions are eligible to apply for funding under the TSAF:

- Atlantic Technological University
- Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
- Dundalk Institute of Technology
- Munster Technological University
- South East Technological University
- Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
- Technological University Dublin

Applications for funding at a sectoral level are encouraged. Participation in a sectoral application for funding does not preclude an institution from applying for institutional-level funding. Institutions wishing to participate in a consortium application should notify the HEA prior to the submission deadline and no later than **7th September 2023.** A separate application template for sectoral applications will be provided.

4. Scope and eligible costs

The TSAF will support initiatives that are critical to institutions delivering on their missions and strategic plans; in this regard, the fund will provide targeted support for a range of strategic activities, as appropriate to each institution's context and stage of development. Institutions may apply for a contribution towards the costs of maintaining and mainstreaming existing activities or to initiate new activities that are of strategic importance to the success of the institution. The fund will also make provision for initiatives relating to further landscape reform.

Institutions may choose to apply for funding under one or more of the cost categories set out in Table 1: Eligible Costs.

Table 1: Eligible Costs

Cost category	Indicative activities
Change management and integration	Managerial and structural reforms OECD Review implementation Cross institutional capacity building Multicampus initiatives
People and culture	Institutional capacity building Professional development, collaboration, and training Policy review and implementation
Data and systems	System integration Digital infrastructure Shared services Website development and maintenance Cyber security

Engagement	Stakeholder engagement
	Outreach
	International engagement
	Alumni networking
Students	Student services
	Stipends for research students enrolled before 31st August 2022
	Academic programme/curriculum development
	FE/HE transitions
System coherence, reform, and consolidation	Tertiary
	Sectoral collaboration
	Sectoral representation
	Landscape reform and consolidation

Ineligible expenditure

The following activities are ineligible for TSAF support:

- Core funding[1]
- Infrastructure costs
- Capital costs
- Costing arising from completed activities
- Indirect costs[2]
- Stipends for research students enrolled after 31st August 2022
- Staff union representation

5. TSAF funding and institutional co-funding

The HEA, with the support of the DFHERIS, recognises that the ongoing development of the technological sector carries costs for institutions that cannot entirely be met through their own resources. The TSAF is designed to provide a contribution towards these costs, supporting the sector to be enabled in terms of sustainability and self-sufficiency. With this in mind, institutions will be required to set out how project initiatives will be co-funded by the institution as part of the application. Institutional co-funding and consideration given to the sustainability of proposed initiatives will be considered as part of the TSAF assessment process. Institutions in receipt of funding

---

[1] The TSAF is designed to provide project funding, not institutional core support.
[2] Indirect costs are costs in support of project objectives but not necessarily incurred for the project and as such cannot be readily associated with the project.

under TSAF will also be required to monitor and report to the HEA on institutional investment (level of time and resources) as the project is implemented.

A total of €50 million in funding is available under TSAF. Proposals for funding must be in respect of costs that are critical to the strategic development of eligible institutions, as outlined in Section 4 of this call document. Applications for funding should be made using the TSAF application template, which includes provision of a detailed project budget setting out realistic timelines and costs over the 30 months of the fund.

In applying for funding, institutions should note the following:

- Proposed activities should be achievable within the timeline of the fund, and particular attention should be given to the achievability of activities that involve external partners.
- When determining the amount of TSAF funding requested, institutions should be realistic in providing costings, noting the total funding available to the sector (€50m).
- Project budgets should present the total funding required over the 30 months of the scheme. This should include details of TSAF funding requested and the level of institutional co-funding.
- The information provided in the budget may be subject to verification.
- The HEA will determine the amount of funding awarded to institutions, which may be less than the amount of funding requested (see Section 7: Assessment Process).
- TSAF will operate as a managed fund. The rationale for this approach is that institutions in the technological sector are at different stages of maturity and may require differing levels of investment to support their development and success.
- Successful applicants will be notified of their funding allocation and receive the first instalment in December 2023. The dispersal of further funding will be subject to demonstrated progress.

- Double funding is not permitted and institutions applying for funding under TSAF should take the necessary steps to ensure there will be no double funding in respect of proposed activities.
- Funding may be removed or redistributed at the discretion of the HEA where circumstances change, where there is insufficient progress on projects in accordance with project plans, update reports, KPIs etc., or where reporting and monitoring requirements set down by the HEA are not adhered to by institutions in receipt of funding.

6. Application process

The application form consists of six sections and includes two appendices, as follows:

1) Project summary
2) Project relevance
3) Project design
4) Efficiency and effectiveness
5) Governance and financial oversight
6) Authorised signature

Appendix 1: Work package descriptions
Appendix 2: Project budget

Institutions should familiarise themselves with the information and guidance provided in this call document before completing the application form. Information provided in this document and in the application template should be read carefully to ensure that the institution's proposal is eligible and within scope of the scheme. Please note that information provided in the application form may be subject to verification. All proposals must be endorsed by the institution's President. Electronic signatures (DocuSign/Adobe Sign) may be used for this purpose.

In submitting an application, institutions will be deemed to have accepted the conditions outlined in this call and to have agreed to be bound by them. Acceptance

of an award by an institution will be in accordance with this call and any conditions as set out in a letter of offer and/or grant agreement.

Closing date: Submissions must be received by the HEA in electronic format (systemperformance@hea.ie) **by 19th October 2023 at 17:00**. Applications will not be assessed if late or ineligible.

7. Assessment process

The HEA, with reference to its knowledge of the Irish higher-education system, will undertake a qualitative assessment of project proposals in line with the criteria set down in Table 2: Assessment Criteria.

Table 2: Assessment Criteria

Relevance	- Alignment with the objectives of the TSAF. - Alignment with the institution's mission and strategic plan. - Coherence and alignment with the progress made under the Technological University Transformation Fund (TUTF). - Contribution to national and institutional policy objectives, in particular the TURN report, National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 and OECD Review. Appropriate outputs and result indicators and measures should be referenced, as appropriate. - Alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Climate Action Plan 2023. - Understanding of, and ability to build on existing national and international best practice, in further developing the Technological University sector. - Regional, national, and international impact that will enable the institution to realise its potential. - Understanding of the culture and identity of the technological sector and collaboration and contribution towards developing the same at institution and sector level.
Quality of proposal and project design	- Clear and pertinent project objectives. - Credibility of the proposed approach, with reference to milestones that are achievable within the timeframe of the fund.

	• Project plan is sound, and deliverable (in a 30-month timeframe) based on the work packages described. • Deliverables are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) and clearly identified for each work package.
Efficiency & effectiveness	• Level of institutional co-funding and consideration of sustainability, including plans to mainstream activities. • Satisfactory ratio between the estimated costs and the expected results. • Necessity of proposed expenditure for the implementation of activities proposed. • Consideration given to sequencing and resourcing of tasks in the activities proposed and within the proposed timeframe. • Clarity of roles and relationships with project stakeholders (enterprises, local authorities, state agencies, civic societies). • Track record and delivery of results.
Governance and financial oversight	• Appropriateness and effectiveness of governance structures and procedures, including financial and risk management. • Effective project management structures.

In determining funding allocations under TSAF, the HEA will give due consideration to its knowledge of the requirements of the technological sector, including an individual institution's receipt of, and progress with, separate funding streams to support capacity building in TUs.[3]

Organisations will be informed of the outcome of the assessment process in writing. Prior to the dispersal of funding, successful institutions may be required to meet a number of conditions, including, but not limited to, the receipt of satisfactory reports on previous projects, submission of all documents referenced in the application form, and submission of a revised budget and project plan. As such, any Letter of Offer

---

[3] Funding streams include the National Recovery and Resilience Fund (€40m), which funds the N-TUTORR project, the Technological University Transformation Fund (€90m), and the TU Research and Innovation Supporting Enterprise (TU RISE) scheme (€84m), which is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union. While these funds complement the TSAF, each supporting the development of institutions in the technological higher education sector, they possess distinct objectives, as specified in the respective funding documentation.

should be considered provisional until the HEA confirms that the relevant conditions have been met.

The HEA's decision on eligibility and funding allocations is final.

8. Post award monitoring and reporting

Robust, evidence-based monitoring and evaluation arrangements will be established to ensure that funding is achieving its intended strategic objectives as efficiently and effectively as possible. Reporting will occur on a bi-annual basis and involve analysis of approved project workplans and budgets against interim and annual reports that detail progress.[4] These biannual reports will be comprised of narrative, work packages, and budget reports on progress. Reports will include overviews of project progress, analysis of results, lessons learned and governance and organisational updates. Additionally, progress meetings will be held with institutions on a quarterly basis. Institutions may also be subject to field monitoring visits by representatives of the HEA or external consultants contracted to assist with monitoring and verifying financial expenditure, progress, and results.

Monitoring and Reporting guidelines will make clear that institutions in receipt of funding are expected to ensure that specific project expenditure is clearly identifiable and verifiable in accounting systems. This will include obligations to systematically record and monitor all project-related transactions against the approved project budget. Institutions should be aware of the requirements of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Circular 13/2014) relating to the Management of and Accountability of Grants, and institutions will be asked to confirm that the funds provided by the HEA will be used for the purposes intended and that the institution will comply with the Statement of Principles for Grantees (Appendix 2 of Circular 13/2014) relating to: Clarity; Governance; Value for money; and Fairness.

---

[4] Institutions will develop project workplans and budgets in line with their funding allocation. The institutional project plan and budget approved by the HEA must be adhered to and any changes will need to be agreed in advance by the HEA.

The HEA is committed to ensuring value for money and accountability in all its investments. As such, funding may be paused, removed or redistributed at the discretion of the HEA where circumstances change, where there is insufficient progress on projects in accordance with project plans, update reports, KPIs etc., or where reporting and monitoring requirements set down by the HEA are not adhered to by institutions in receipt of funding.

9. Freedom of information

Information held by the HEA on TSAF will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2014 (FOI Act). Policies and procedures on access to information is set out in the following link: https://www.hea.ie/en/freedom-of-information

10. Contact

Queries regarding the TSAF should be directed to systemperformance@hea.ie. All queries will be managed through an FAQ process. Deadline for queries relating to the application is 5th October 2023.