



GOVERNMENT OF
MALTA

MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION,
SPORT, YOUTH, RESEARCH
AND INNOVATION
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT
FOR YOUTH, RESEARCH
AND INNOVATION



European Innovation Council Support Scheme Rules for Participation – Non State Aid

XJENZAMALTA

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1. Introduction

Xjenza Malta is receiving proposals under the European Innovation Council Support Scheme. The aim of the scheme is to support clients applying to the European Innovation Council Programmes- (EIC Pathfinder, Transition and Accelerator, Open and Challenges calls) and who will apply for the cut-off dates as stated in the Horizon Europe [EIC work programme](#). The scheme is exclusively available to sole applicants and consortium coordinators.

The EIC is Europe's flagship innovation programme to identify, develop and scale up breakthrough technologies and game changing innovations. It has a budget of €10.1 billion to support game changing innovations throughout the lifecycle from early-stage research, to proof of concept, technology transfer, and the financing and scale up of start-ups and SMEs. For more information on the EIC programs, please refer to the work program and contact your National Contact Point at alessandra.loria@gov.mt to assess whether the EIC is right for you.

Maltese entities that plan to act as coordinators are eligible to benefit from this Scheme under Non State Aid rules. The Applicant must be an entity registered as one of the following:

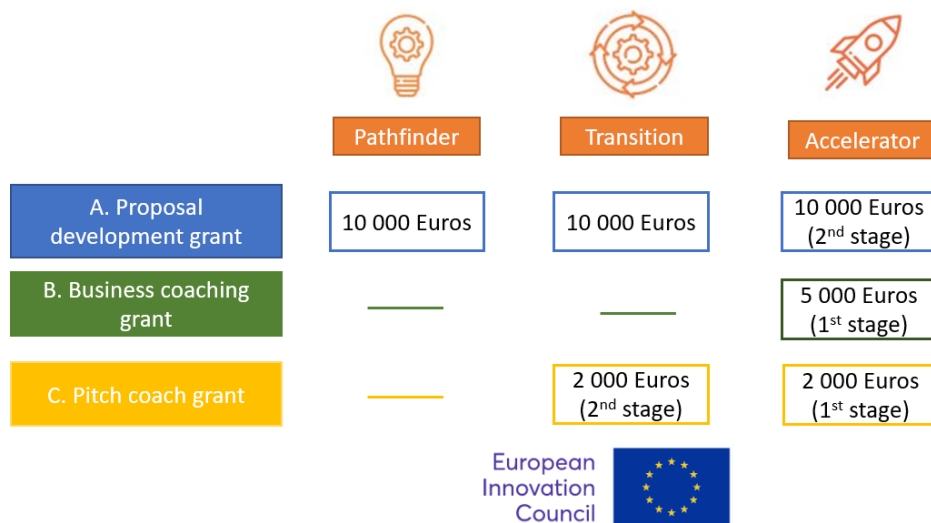
- i. Public research and knowledge-dissemination organisation whose main activities are education which is not offered for remuneration and independent research organisation whose results are widely disseminated on a non-discriminatory basis.
- ii. Public entity that does not offer goods or services on a market for remuneration.

Applicants may apply for Option A and/or Option B, and/or Option C depending on the EIC programme applied to and the stage of their EIC application. Applicants may apply for:

- Option A – Proposal Development Grant: this grant allows the recipient to be reimbursed up to 10,000 Euros to cover the costs of a grant writing support consultant. The consultant will provide a full and comprehensive support during the whole process of proposal development. This grant is applicable for the following EIC programs: EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition first stage proposals (the Maltese applicant must be project coordinator to qualify for this grant), and EIC Accelerator stage 2.

- Option B – Business Coach Grant: this grant allows the recipient to be reimbursed up to 5,000 Euros to cover the costs of a business coach. The option is exclusively available for EIC Accelerator stage 1 applicants. The coach will provide their services to support the development of a slideshow and preparation for the interview, as well as providing coaching services to improve the quality of the business case and increase chances of success.
- Option C – Pitch Coach Grant: this grant allows the recipient to be reimbursed up to 2,000 Euros to cover the costs of a pitch coach. The pitch coach will support the person(s) who will make the business case pitch to improve their presentation skills and preparedness during the interview. This option is available for EIC Transition 2nd stage and EIC Accelerator 1st stage.

The scheme options are summarised in the image below. Please read the rest of the document carefully to be familiar with the full set of conditions of this call.



2. Definitions

- Applicant means anyone eligible to apply in terms of these Rules for Participation and who consequently applies for funding under this scheme.
- Arm's length means that the conditions of the transaction between the contracting parties do not differ from those which would be stipulated between independent enterprises and contain no element of collusion. Any transaction that results from an open, transparent, and non-discriminatory procedure is considered as meeting the arm's length principle.
Having family ties or a personal relationship between the service provider and the applicant will lead to a breach of the arm's length principle.
- Coordinator is one of the beneficiaries of a project consortium that is appointed as the single point of contact between Xjenza Malta and the consortium partners from proposal submission to project end. The coordinator entity will have the responsibility of ensuring that all the partners involved in the consortium are eligible and supervises the project workflow with the help of WP leaders. Additionally, the Coordinator entity will be required to submit the project application on behalf of the consortium and must also compile and submit reports / deliverables to the funding bodies, which in turn will relay these documents to the Lead Agency.
- EIC Pathfinder which refers to the "EIC Pathfinder Open" and "EIC Pathfinder Challenges" as per the EIC Work Programme.
- EIC Transition which refers to the "EIC Transition Open" and "EIC Transition Challenges" as per the EIC Work Programme.
- EIC Accelerator which refers to the "EIC Accelerator Open" and "EIC Accelerator Challenges" as per the EIC Work Programme.
- EIC Open: It refers to the Open modalities of EIC Accelerator, Transition and Pathfinder. Calls under this modality are designed to enable support for any technologies and innovations that cut across different scientific, technological, sectoral and application fields or represent novel combinations.
- EIC Challenge: It refers to the Challenge modalities of EIC Accelerator, Transition and Pathfinder. Calls under this modality provide funding to address specific technological and innovation breakthroughs. These challenges take into account EU priorities for transitioning

to a green, digital and healthy society, as well as the overall strategic planning for Horizon Europe, and the inputs of stakeholders, experts and the EIC Board.

- Partner is defined as a partner in a consortium of a funded project.
- Public Entity is any Ministry, Department, Entity, Authority, Public Commission, Public Sector Foundation, or similar organisation that does not carry out an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 TFEU and that exercises public power, or else acts in its own capacity as public authority, where the activity in question forms part of the essential function of the State or is connected with those functions by its nature, its aim and the rules to which it is subject. However, the classification of a particular entity as an undertaking depends entirely on the nature of its activities, and the overriding criterion of consideration is whether it carries out an economic activity or not, e.g. an entity that is formally part of the public administration may nevertheless have to be regarded as an undertaking within the meaning of Article 107(1) of the Treaty. Thus, an entity that carries out both economic and non-economic activities is to be regarded as an undertaking only with regards to the former. In this case, if the economic activity can be separated from the exercise of public powers, then that entity acts as an undertaking in relation to that activity and the financing, the costs and the revenues of that economic activity shall be accounted for separately from the other non-commercial activities. If an economic activity cannot be separated from the exercise of public power, the activities exercised by that entity as a whole, remain connected with the exercise of those public powers and therefore fall outside the notion of an undertaking.
- Research and knowledge-dissemination organisation means an entity (such as universities or research institutes, technology transfer agencies, innovation intermediaries, research-oriented physical or virtual collaborative entities), irrespective of its legal status (organised under public or private law) or way of financing, whose primary goal is to independently conduct fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development or to widely disseminate the results of such activities by way of teaching, publication or knowledge transfer. Where such entity also pursues economic activities the financing, the costs and the revenues of those economic activities must be accounted for separately. Undertakings that can exert a decisive influence upon such an entity, in the quality of, for example, shareholders or members, may not enjoy preferential access to the results generated by it.

3. Support options details

The support scheme is available for all EIC Pathfinder, Transition and Accelerator Open and Challenges calls.

a. Option A: Proposal development grant

Eligible applicants will be supported by an experienced EIC proposal writer/consultant to write a Pathfinder, Transition (first stage) or Accelerator (2nd stage) proposal.

This option provides up to 10,000 Euros to hire consultancy services to develop EIC proposals.

Applicants will engage a consultant or firm to improve opportunities for Maltese entities intending to submit an EIC proposal and who will support the applicant through proposal writing and submission. The consultant engaged will focus on factors that will increase chances of winning, supporting the preparation of all the paperwork that goes with the proposal. The selected service provider must have a proven track record in proposal writing for the EIC. Among others, the following activities are expected:

- Project idea formulation
- Proposal development focusing on key criteria being evaluated according to the specific EIC program (Excellence, Impact, Quality and Efficiency etc)
- Develop and support in creating a work plan
- Project budgeting
- Overall project management and administrative tasks
- Provide support for the interview stage of the evaluation process, which includes presentation, interview and pitching support/training
- Support application submission through the EIC portal
- Market research and business plan compilation for EIC Accelerator

Applicants are encouraged to get in touch with the service providers that they intend to propose to ensure they would be available for the above activities and that their service fees are within the grant for proposal development.

- In all cases:
 - The grant will only be disbursed after submission of proof that the application has been submitted as a Maltese registered applicant to EIC within the deadlines stipulated.
 - In addition, applicants are required to set up regular meetings with the EIC National Contact Point to provide updates on the EIC application status.
 - The applicants also need to submit the invoice from the service provider.

- EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition single stage proposals:
 - The grant is restricted to Malta-based applicants that assume the role of coordinators in the project consortium to develop the required proposal, and not as consortium participants.

- EIC Transition:
 - Proposals are restricted to results generated by EIC Pathfinder projects (including projects funded under EIC pilot Pathfinder, Horizon 2020 FET-Open, FET-Proactive, FET Flagships); ERANETs projects under the FET programme (including ChistERA, quantERA and FLAG-ERA); European Research Council (ERC) Proof of Concept projects. In 2024, Cluster 2 projects will also be eligible. A list of eligible project results can be found [here](#).

- EIC Accelerator second-stage proposal:
 - Xjenza Malta requires proof of positive evaluation from the European Commission after having submitted the short proposal to the EIC Accelerator stage 1. Applicants must apply to the support scheme at the latest 4 months before the deadline stipulated by EIC.

b. Option B: Business coaching grant

Eligible applicants will be supported by a business coach. Business coaches need to have a proven track record in managing a broad range of business issues associated with high growth, proven

experience in innovation management within SMEs, a successful track record in coaching senior management through the development of their company's vision and strategy.

Option B is restricted to EIC Accelerator 1st stage applicants. It may be requested simultaneously with option C.

The coach should challenge assumptions and consider new options in a learning-and-solving manner. The hired coach should tackle all the following elements:

- Business development: focused on the identification, analysis, and evaluation of business opportunities, including Value Proposition and Business Model development, industry and market analysis, strategic partnerships, and marketing.
- Organisation development: mobilising company resources on entrepreneurship, leadership and team building to recruiting, organisation building, manufacturing management and distribution channels.
- Financial development: to support with investment readiness and financial planning, including revenue/cost structure and cash flow management.

A maximum grant amount of €5,000 may be requested by the applicant to cover the fees of the business coach service provider. A minimum of 50 hours of business coaching activities shall be carried out under Option B.

Applicants are required to submit a coaching plan within the application form including objectives and activities. Applicants are expected to submit timesheets, a coaching report as well as a 20-slide Investor Deck covering key elements of the business plan including the problem/solution, value proposition, technology, business model, go-to-market, team, and financial plan once their application has been submitted. The applicants also need to submit the invoice from the service provider.

c. Option C: Pitch coach grant

Eligible applicants to EIC Transition (second stage) and Accelerator (first stage) will be supported by an experienced pitch or communications coach. Pitch coaches should possess

coaching and training experience with both established and start-up organisations as well as strong communication and public speaking skills and experience in storytelling.

Coaching provides applicants with the opportunity to further their communication skills, as well as develop the capacity to share the right information, engage the audience and pitch to potential investors. Pitch coaches are expected to:

- Help participants practise and revise their investor pitch or jury interview in the case of Transition
- Provide practise sessions and suggestions for improvements

- For EIC Accelerator:
 - Support in scripting and structuring a video pitch
 - Preparation of pitch deck(s) for EIC Accelerator

A maximum grant amount of €2,000 may be requested by the applicant to cover the fees of the pitch coach service provider.

Applicants are required to submit:

- timesheets,
- a pitch-deck of up to 10 slides,
- a video pitch of up to three (3) minutes with the core members of the team (up to three people) for Accelerator once their application was favourably considered and funded.
- The applicants also need to submit the invoice from the service provider.

- For EIC Transition applicants:
 - Option A and Option C must be requested at the same time.

- For Accelerator:
 - applicants may apply to the options separately.
 - To access Option A (2nd stage), applicants must submit proof of successfully having past the 1st stage and having been invited to the second stage or proof of a successfully completed EIC Accelerator Pug-in Go To Market (R&I Unit).

- o Timesheets will be required once the application is submitted, and in the case of Accelerator support, the video pitch recording.

4. Eligibility, rules and obligations

The applicant must be a Maltese entity that meets the eligibility criteria of the EIC programme they intend to apply for, as stipulated in the EIC Work Programme. All Maltese registered entities that meet EIC programmes' eligibility criteria are eligible to apply for the EIC Support Scheme's funds.

To apply under these National Rules, the applicant needs to adhere to the justifications mentioned in the application form as to why the activities to be undertaken do not meet the criteria of Article 107(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (i.e., not falling under State Aid implications).

Maltese entities that plan to act as coordinators are eligible to apply for this Scheme under these Non State Aid rules. The Applicant must be an entity registered as one of the following:

- i. Public entity (excluding public Research and Knowledge Dissemination Organisations (non-RKDO)) whose activity does not constitute an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 TFEU; or
- ii. Public Research and Knowledge Dissemination Organisation (RKDO) that does not carry out an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 TFEU.

Please note that:

- The grant will only be provided to applications that submit their proposal at least 4 months before the selected call's relevant deadline (for Accelerator, before the deadline of second stage submission provided by EIC, and for Pathfinder and Transition, before the deadline set in the EIC Work Program). For EIC Pathfinder and Transition, in cases where the work plan publication is less than 4 months away the relevant deadline, the deadline to apply will be 30 days after the publication of the work plan.

- The grant will only be disbursed after submission of proof that the application has been submitted as a Maltese registered applicant to EIC within the deadlines stipulated.
- For all options, applicants must research suitable consultants and present 3 different options to the support scheme. Applicants must provide evidence of the consultant's experience with EIC applications and, when relevant, expertise in the proposal thematic area. Applicants should briefly describe the rationale for selecting the chosen consultant.
- Applications must be endorsed by the entity's legal representative. Applicants already featuring on Xjenza Malta's non-compliance list will not be eligible to apply for this Scheme.

- EIC Pathfinder and Transition:
 - to be eligible for the EIC Support Scheme grants, the Maltese applicant MUST be the consortium coordinator, as evidenced by a consortium agreement and presentation of proof of submission with the Maltese entity as coordinator.

- EIC Transition:
 - A proof of a successful accession through the first application stage must be submitted by the applicant when applying for any second stage option (Option A for Accelerator, and Option C for Transition).
 - the applicants will have to evidence their right to use the results/intellectual property of eligible projects.
 - Applicants may only request Option C together with Option A, and must submit proof of invitation and attendance to the second stage interview with EIC, as well as submitting the relevant timesheet and invoice from the consultants to obtain the Option C funding. Applicants also have to consider and assess 3 pitch coach options in the original application to the support scheme.

- EIC Accelerator:

A proof of a successful accession through the first application stage must be submitted by the applicant when applying for any second stage option.

5. Financing

Each applicant is invited to provide a breakdown of the anticipated costs to carry out the proposed activities as part of the application form. Xjenza Malta reserves the right to negotiate any amount quoted by the applicant should this be considered as being over-estimated.

The amount of the Award available to any one successful applicant is capped as follows:

- €10,000 for Option A,
- €5,000 for Option B and
- €2,000 for Option C.

Consumables and equipment cannot be funded under this scheme. Expenses related to loans, interests and recoverable value added tax are also considered as ineligible costs.

No double funding is permitted for the same activities carried out in the EIC Support Scheme and in conjunction with any other local or foreign schemes.

Eligible costs:

For Option A:

- EIC proposal writer/s and consulting services fees.

For Option B:

- Business coaching fees.

For Option C:

- Pitch coaching fees.

To receive the reimbursement process for all options, the applicant must provide:

- 1. An invoice dated after the date of signature of the submission to the EIC scheme
- 2. payment receipt from the service provider dated after the submission to the EIC scheme
- 3. Proof of submission, and,
- 4. The final report form filled in.

Additionally:

- For Option A: the full proposal.
- For Option B: timesheets, a coaching report as well as a 20-slide Investor Deck covering key elements of the business plan.
- For option C: timesheets, a pitch-deck of up to 10 slides and a video pitch of up to 3 minutes

For all options, Xjenza Malta will provide 100% reimbursement upon confirmation of proposal submission (short application proposal under Option A and B, long application proposal under Option C) and against reception of all justifying documents listed in this document.

Additionally, eligible Costs are to conform to the following and are subject to the final audit scrutiny:

- The applicant must follow procurement regulations and it shall be ensured that the best value for money principle has been adopted.
- Xjenza Malta may request further documentation and information to ensure that the best value for money principle was respected, such as quotations, track record of selected service provider, request for quotations calls, etc.

Commercial transactions between any applicants or consortium partners, or between any applicants or a consortium partner and a company with similar shareholding to a consortium partner, is not allowed. All transactions need to be carried out in line with the arm's length principle outlined in Section 2.

6. Conflict of Interest

A Conflict of Interest (COI) exists for Option A, B and C if the business coach, pitch coach and proposal writer/s or consulting service:

- is a Beneficiary in the same Horizon Europe proposal to be submitted to the European Commission under the EIC programs;
- stands to benefit directly if the proposal is positively evaluated. Providing market research information to the applicant will not be considered a COI;

- has a family / personal relationship with any person representing an applicant;
- is a director / trustee / partner of the applicant or involved in the management of the applicant's entity or is an employee of the same entity.

7. Submission of Application Form

Interested Applicants are to submit their application form electronically to eicscheme.xjenzamalta@gov.mt with "EIC Support Scheme – NAME OF LEGAL ENTITY + Application" as a subject heading.

EIC Pathfinder and Transition: Applications must be submitted at least 4 months before call closure date. In cases where the work plan publication is less than 4 months away the relevant deadline, the deadline to apply will be 30 days after the publication of the work plan,

EIC Accelerator: 1st stage applicants can apply at any time to the support scheme. For 2nd stage applications, applicants must apply at least 4 months before the (12 months) deadline stipulated by EIC for Full Application submission.

Xjenza Malta has the right to terminate any or all options should budget be exhausted or upon its own discretion.

The application must be dated and signed by the applicant and the legal representative. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

Submissions should include the following documents:

- the 'EIC Support Scheme - Application Form' provided by Xjenza Malta that is associated with this call.
- Proposed project idea (project's brief) and proof of having a technology with an appropriate TRL.
- profile of at least 3 *potential* business or pitch coaches (including their CVs), or consulting firms in the case of full proposals
- company profile/track record of the applicant's legal entity.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure the timely and correct delivery of the application form to Xjenza Malta. It should be noted that emails larger than 6MB will be automatically rejected by the mail system. The applicant may make use of cloud storage to send their application.

8. Selection Process

Applications will be assessed by an evaluation panel set up by Xjenza Malta. Evaluators will assess the viability of the project idea for the specified EIC call, whether Open or Challenge modalities. If the idea is deemed not to qualify to the specified EIC call criteria, the evaluators may reject the EIC Support Scheme proposal on this basis. The evaluators may also request more information to the applicant to assess this, and the applicant will have a maximum of 5 working days to provide feedback. To be awarded, there will be a consensus of all evaluators on the merits of the project idea for the selected EIC program.

Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Suitability of the project idea to be submitted to EIC criteria and its excellence
- Appropriate TRL level with proof
- Proof of having developed a novel technological solution with a superior value proposition, tackling an important problem at European level and having potential for strong market demand

In addition, for Option A:

- EIC Consultants having a proven track record of the proposed consultancy individuals/firms, including a list of other EIC projects that have been supported in the past.

In addition, for Option B:

- Consultant must have a proven track record with at least 5 years in managing a broad range of business issues associated with high growth, proven experience in innovation management within SMEs, a successful track record in coaching senior management through the development of their company's vision and strategy;
- Personal track record in coaching organisations and business leaders. Coaches should demonstrate an existing successful track record as a coach;

- Extensive network of contacts with expertise in a wide range of business functions; – track record in managing a range of business issues associated with periods of high growth.
- Proven experience in innovation management including for example evidence of having done similar coaching work previously; and ability to demonstrate a good understanding of many business areas such as strategic planning; leadership and organisational development.

In addition, for Option C, Pitch coaches will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- At least 5 years pitch coaching and training experience with both established and start-up organizations.
- Strong communication and public speaking skills, with a knack for storytelling.
- Adaptable in facilitation style and approach to fit the needs of the audience, the content, and technology.
- Strong capability to think creatively, analyse information, determine needs, and develop strategies to support enterprises to pitch effectively.
- Experience coaching SMEs working in different fields including agriculture, energy, infrastructure, health, ICT, and other key sectors.

9. Award Duration

Upon successful completion of the evaluation stage, it may be necessary for Xjenza Malta to negotiate the amount of the Award requested in the application form. Xjenza Malta retains the right to provide Awards of a varied sum should the amount in the 'breakdown of costs' appear to have been overestimated.

The deadline for completion of the projects/activities funded through the award must comply with the chosen or assigned due date. For Pathfinder and Transition, all activities must be implemented before the call closure, and for Accelerator, the full proposal must be submitted within 12 months from the date of notification from the European Commission of having passed the short application

Upon completion of the activities/projects, the applicant is to submit a final report within 30 days according to a standard template developed by Xjenza Malta. The final report will need to be accompanied by all relevant documentation, including receipts demonstrating how the award was spent. Xjenza Malta retains the right to audit the financial documentation and to request further proof of expenditure of the award. Should there be a significant discrepancy between the sum of the award disbursed by Xjenza Malta and the amount spent by the applicant (as substantiated through receipts or other financial documentation) Xjenza Malta retains the right to request a reimbursement of the unspent funds.

The start date of the project is the date of signature of the letter of intent.

10. Correspondence

Successful applicants will be required to inform the Scheme administrator at eicscheme.xjenzamalta@gov.mt within the Framework Programme Unit at Xjenza Malta regularly of any direct or indirect outputs resulting from this award during and beyond the lifetime of the award.

Successful applicants are also required to submit a detailed report on the activities undertaken to the Scheme administrator within thirty (30) days from the date of completion of the activities funded by the Award. For those activities extending for the full duration of this Scheme (i.e. one year from the starting date on the signed letter of intent), final reports should be submitted to Xjenza Malta by no later than 30 days from that date. Xjenza Malta reserves the right to take any necessary legal action should such reporting not be submitted.

Reference to this award should be made on any publication, marketing or PR material that is generated in relation to the project or activity undertaken.

11. Confidentiality of Submissions

Unless otherwise indicated, all application submissions shall be treated in strict confidence.

The data collected by Xjenza Malta via the application for the aid and its subsequent processing by Xjenza Malta to evaluate data subject's request for aid under the Scheme is in line with:

- i. The Rules for Participation;
- ii. Data Protection Act, (CAP 586 of the Laws of Malta) and Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of Xjenza Malta (LN112/2024) on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).
- iii. The legitimate basis to process personal data submitted by the data subject by virtue of his/her written application for aid is Regulation 6 (1)(b) of the General Data Protection Regulation ("GDPR"), as 'processing is necessary in order to take steps at the request of the data subject prior to entering into a contract'.

12. Further Information

For further information kindly contact the Scheme Administrator as per details below:

eicscheme.xjenzamalta@gov.mt