



## Research Networking Scheme

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Rules for Participation 2026 | Option **A**  
Rules for State Aid *de minimis* regime





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## 1 Introduction

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The Research Networking Scheme is a national funding scheme supporting initiatives aimed at strengthening research in Malta for local researchers to connect, collaborate, and share knowledge. The scheme supports capacity building, promotes the generation of innovative ideas, and fosters collaborative initiatives that can lead to impactful research outcomes.

The main objectives of the Research Networking Scheme are:

- To facilitate opportunities for researchers to build partnerships and networks
- To encourage interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration
- To promote the exchange of knowledge, skills, and expertise
- To strengthen Malta's presence and engagement in the international research community

These objectives are achieved by supporting activities that enable researchers to engage with peers, stakeholders, and organisations, both locally and abroad, thereby enhancing Malta's research capacity and global connectivity.

## 2 The Research Networking Scheme

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### 2.1 Programme Scope and Focus

The **Research Networking Scheme** managed by Xjenza Malta is a support funding scheme which consists of 3 components including:

- The Local Networking Scheme (LNS)
- The International Networking Scheme (INS)
- Open Access Journal Support

Access to the national and international networking components of this scheme shall be open to all eligible applicants and **shall not be restricted solely to beneficiaries of Xjenza Malta research grants.**



### **Option A: Local Networking Scheme**

The **Local Networking Scheme (LNS)** provides funding for networking activities conducted exclusively within Malta. This includes the organisation and participation in **local seminars, workshops, training sessions, and conferences.**

Applications under Option A (Local Networking Scheme) can fall under 1 of the 3 below:

- **Malta - Malta Networking**
  - o Two or more Maltese Registered Entities collaborating to host local events.
- **Malta – Foreign Networking**
  - o A Maltese-registered entity collaborates with a reputable foreign entity to host a local event in Malta.
  - o The event should serve as a national networking opportunity, with participation from other Maltese entities.
- **Malta-Foreign Networking with Diaspora researcher**
  - o Given that the international collaborator is also a Maltese Diaspora researcher.

This scheme's core aim is to **boost collaboration among Maltese research institutions and stakeholders.** Events involving multiple local entities (and/or international co-organisers) are considered **Malta-Malta Networking.**

### **Option B: International Networking Scheme**

The **International Networking Scheme (INS)** provides funding for networking activities occurring outside of Malta and is partly funded by the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA). This includes researchers participating in international networking opportunities such as **conferences, workshops, on-site training, or research placements** anywhere in the world. Local activities cannot be carried out under the International Networking Scheme.

Each of these schemes will support opportunities for collaborative initiatives between at least one eligible Maltese undertaking that meets the eligibility criteria and at least one foreign counterpart of proven track record of excellence. Proposals should describe the nature of the joint activities that would be funded through this scheme.



Applicants are to demonstrate how the proposed activities contribute towards and align with achieving the goals of the National R&I Strategy and to describe the potential of any activities to become self-sustaining or generate longer-term outcomes.

### **Option C: Open Access Journal Support**

This opportunity will support researchers **who have already benefited from Xjenza Malta research grants**, to publish their research results with the support of the RNS grant on a peer reviewed open access journal. The publication should be strictly related to projects funded by Xjenza Malta.

#### **2.2 Contacts**

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### 3 Definitions

**Kindly note that the below definitions are harmonised throughout schemes administered by Xjenza Malta, and some terms might not be present within the text of these Rules as they are not relevant.**

<b>Agreement Date</b>	The term refers to the date on which the Grant Agreement is signed by the legal representative of Xjenza Malta.
<b>Applicant</b>	The term refers to any representative of a local entity that is eligible for participation in a Project in terms of these National Rules for Participation and who applies for funding.
<b>Arm's Length</b>	The term means that the conditions of the transaction between the contracting parties do not differ from those which would be stipulated between independent undertakings 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.
<b>Beneficiary</b>	The term Beneficiary refers to the entity that having submitted an application form for funding under this Programme in accordance with these National Rules for Participation, is selected for funding.
<b>Due Diligence</b>	An investigation of an entity or person prior to the signing of the Grant Agreement conducted in order to establish the suitability of the Applicant to receive funding under this Programme.
<b>Eligible Direct Costs</b>	The term refers to those costs incurred directly by the national beneficiaries during the duration of the project and used primarily for the purpose of achieving the objectives of the project. All eligible expenses must be incurred between the Start Date and the End Date of the Project and capped at the approved requested funding value.
<b>Eligible Undertakings</b>	The term refers to undertakings planning to carry out and/or who have carried out Fundamental Research, Industrial Research and/or Experimental Development projects and must either be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. A partnership constituted under the Companies Act, being a partnership <i>en nom collectif</i>, <i>en commandite</i> or a limited liability company; or</li> </ul>



- ii. Duly registered as a co-operative society under the Co-Operative Societies Act, or
- iii. Professional body; or
- iv. NGOs; or
- v. Non-profit making entities (including Foundations).

'Professional Body' may be an organisation, an association, a chamber, society, institute, or a group of professional persons not being enrolled or registered in terms of The Voluntary Organisations Act (CAP 492 of the Laws of Malta) or not being otherwise recognised in terms of Law, and which is generally recognised and acknowledged by the professional persons it seeks to represent as their representative body. For the purposes of this Definition, a professional person is one who has undergone a period of study at a university or a recognised institution of higher learning and has obtained the formal qualification entitling the person to practise the respective profession; and who provides a specialised service to the public, based primarily on a fiduciary relationship between herself/himself and the party to whom s/he provides such service on his own personal credibility and responsibility. 'NGO' means any Voluntary or Non-Governmental Organisation set up in accordance with The Voluntary Organisations Act (CAP 492 of the Laws of Malta). Provided that a duly registered NGO, or a duly registered Professional Body shall also be considered to be an NGO for the purposes of these Rules for Participation.

'Non-profit making' is an entity where:

- i. The statute of which includes an express exclusion making profits as a purpose; and
- ii. An entity the statute of which expressly excludes in its purposes the promotion of private interests, other than a private interest which has a social purpose; and
- iii. An entity that makes no part of its income, capital or property available directly or indirectly to any promoter, founder, member, administrator, donor or any other private interest.



	<p>Provided that if a promoter, founder, member, administrator or donor is another enrolled non-profit making organisation, the limitation in this paragraph (iii) shall not apply where the availability of such income, capital or property is subject to conditions which are consistent with the general purposes of the grantor entity:</p> <p>Provided further that an organisation shall continue to be deemed as non-profit making notwithstanding that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. It obtains a pecuniary gain from its activities when such gain is not received or credited to its members but is exclusively utilised for its established purposes;</li> <li>ii. It buys or sells or otherwise deals in goods or services where such activities are exclusively related to its principal purposes;</li> <li>iii. It is established for the general entertainment, pastime, education or other similar benefit only of its members; or</li> </ol> <p>It is established for the promotion of the social role, ethics, education and values of a trade or profession provided it does not promote the private interests of its members.</p>
<b>End Date</b>	This term refers to the date when the Project Period, having commenced on the Start Date, expires.
<b>Evaluators</b>	Evaluators are the consultants who responded to Xjenza Malta's Call for Applications to provide evaluation services for submissions made through this Programme.
<b>Grant Agreement</b>	This term refers to the funding agreement concluded between the Managing Authority and the Beneficiary/ies and specifies the rights and obligations of the contracting parties
<b>In-kind</b>	The term refers to any non-monetary contribution, such as a service or a good.
<b>Innovation</b>	The term is defined as the internationally novel scientific/technological development of a technological process, product, or service. Also, the definition of Innovation within the same context can also be applied to developments which though not novel represent a step-changing or ground-breaking enhancement of existing technological processes,



	products, or services, or even the application of existing knowledge to new novel applications of these solutions to deliver step-change competitiveness through such an application.
<b>Intellectual Property (IP)</b>	IP means statutory and other proprietary rights and includes patents, trademarks, designs, and confidential information/trade secrets, copyright.
<b>Lead Agency</b>	The primary organization tasked with overseeing and coordinating the entirety of the project.
<b>Legal Entity</b>	The term refers to any entity created within the European Union, having an operating base in Malta and which has legal personality, which may, acting under its own name, exercise rights and be subject to obligations.
<b>Maltese Diaspora</b>	A diaspora researcher is defined as a Maltese citizen or Maltese-descended researcher residing and working abroad.
<b>Managing Authority</b>	The term refers to Xjenza Malta, a Managing Authority established as per Subsidiary Legislation 595.49.
<b>Operating base in Malta</b>	Having an Operating base in Malta refers to a Legal Entity that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Owns, leases, or has been given the right of use by a third party, an adequate premise from where to conduct an eligible economic activity in the region of Malta; and</li> <li>ii. Employs at least one person that is based in Malta and is liable to pay income tax in Malta.</li> </ul>
<b>Partner</b>	The term is defined as an entity within a consortium.
<b>Person months / Person hours</b>	The term refers to a calculation of 'human effort' to evaluate the relationship between the estimated work to be performed and the activities and deliverables to be achieved during the implementation period in months or hours. This is calculated as follows: if 1720 hours are worked in 1 year, equivalent to 215 days of 8 hours each, then 1 person month is equivalent to 143.3... person hours, and to circa 17.91 days.
<b>Principal Investigator</b>	The term refers to the lead researcher on behalf of the local Applicant/Beneficiary of a project consortium. May be the



	same as the Project Coordinator and/or the Project Contact Point.
<b>Project Contact Point</b>	<p>The term refers to the individual, appointed to act on behalf of the Beneficiary and who is responsible for communicating with the Managing Authority about the Project.</p> <p>The Project Contact Point(s) shall have the following responsibilities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. To ensure compliance with the obligations in terms of the Grant Agreement.</li> <li>ii. To compile Periodic Reports and Final Reports including their timely submissions and effective execution of the project.</li> <li>iii. To ensure the submission of all required financial reporting as per the contractual obligations for the partner.</li> </ol> <p>To execute the project activities according to set timeframes and deliverables.</p>
<b>Project Grant</b>	The term is defined as the funding provided to the Beneficiary under the Programme.
<b>Project Period</b>	The term refers to the time required to execute the Project as indicated in the Grant Agreement and runs from the Start Date to the End Date.
<b>Project Value</b>	The term refers to the project budget needed by the Applicant to carry out the project, including any co-financing.
<b>Public Entity</b>	The term refers to any Ministry, Department, Entity, Authority, Public Commission, Public Sector Foundation or a 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



	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p><b>Research and Development</b></p>	<p>This term is defined as the systematic investigation, work or research carried out in any field of science or technology through experiment, theoretical work or analysis undertaken to acquire new knowledge, primarily directed towards a specific practical aim or objective, and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>Fundamental Research</b> means experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundations of phenomena and observable facts, without any direct commercial application or use in view.</li> <li>b) <b>Industrial Research</b> means the planned research or critical investigation aimed at the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for developing new products, processes, or services or aimed at bringing about a significant improvement in existing products, processes or services including digital products, processes or services, in any area, technology, industry or sector (including, but not limited to, digital industries and technologies, such as super-computing, quantum technologies, block chain technologies, artificial intelligence, cyber security, big data and cloud technologies). It comprises the creation of components parts of complex systems and may include the</li> </ul>



	<p>construction of prototypes in a laboratory environment or in an environment with simulated interfaces to existing systems as well as of pilot lines, when necessary for the industrial research and notably for generic technology validation.</p> <p>c) <b>Experimental Development</b> means acquiring, combining, shaping and using existing scientific, technological, business and other relevant knowledge and skills with the aim of developing new or improved products, processes or services in any area, technology, industry or sector (including, but not limited to, digital industries and technologies, such as for example super-computing, quantum technologies, block chain technologies, artificial intelligence, cyber security, big data and cloud or edge technologies). This may also include, for example, activities aiming at the conceptual definition, planning and documentation of new products, processes or services.</p> <p>Experimental development may comprise prototyping, demonstrating, piloting, testing and validation of new or improved products, processes or services in environments representative of real-life operating conditions where the primary objective is to make further technical improvements on products, processes or services that are not substantially set. This may include the development of a commercially usable prototype or pilot which is necessarily the final commercial product, and which is too expensive to produce for it to be used only for demonstration and validation purposes.</p> <p>Experimental development does not include routine or periodic changes made to existing products, production lines, manufacturing processes, services, and other operations in progress, even if those changes may represent improvements.</p>
<p><b>Research and Knowledge-Dissemination</b></p>	<p>The term refers to an entity (such as universities or research institutes, technology transfer agencies, Innovation intermediaries, research-oriented physical or virtual</p>



<p><b>Organisation (RKDO)</b></p>	<p>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.</p>
<p><b>Single Undertaking</b></p>	<p>The term means all enterprises having at least one of the following relationships with each other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. One enterprise has a majority of the shareholders' or members' voting rights in another enterprise;</li> <li>ii. One enterprise has the right to appoint or remove a majority of the members of the administrative, management or supervisory body of another enterprise;</li> <li>iii. One enterprise has the right to exercise a dominant influence on another enterprise pursuant to a contract entered into with that enterprise or pursuant to a provision in its Memorandum and Articles of association;</li> <li>iv. One enterprise, which is a shareholder in or member of another enterprise, controls alone, pursuant to an agreement with other shareholders in or members of that enterprise, a majority of shareholders' or members' voting rights in that enterprise.</li> </ul> <p>Enterprises having any of the relationships referred to in points (i) to (iv) above through one or more other enterprises shall be considered to be a Single Undertaking.</p>
<p><b>Start Date</b></p>	<p>The term refers to date established for the official start of the project in the Grant Agreement.</p>
<p><b>Start of Works</b></p>	<p>This term refers to the earlier of either the Start of Works relating to the investment, or the first legally binding</p>



	commitment to order equipment or any other commitment that makes the investment irreversible. Buying land and preparatory works such as obtaining permits and conducting feasibility studies are not considered 'Start of Works'. For take-overs, 'Start of Works' means the moment of acquiring the assets directly linked to the acquired establishment.
<b>Start-up</b>	The term shall be defined as an undertaking that has been established for less than five (5) years following its registration. For Eligible Undertakings that are not subject to registration, the five-year eligibility period shall start from either the moment when the undertaking starts its economic activity or the moment it becomes liable to tax with regard to its economic activity, whichever is earlier.
<b>Subcontracted Activity</b>	The term refers to any activity related to the project, (including but not limited to consultancy), which is not carried out directly by a Beneficiary or its employees but is carried out under any terms by any third party (local or foreign) individual, company, partnership, or entity.

#### 4 Eligibility Criteria and Applications

This section provides details as to the criteria which must be checked in order to assess the entity's eligibility to apply and the application's fit within this Programme.

These Rules for Participation are applicable to undertakings **that carry out an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 TFEU.**

Any **eligible undertaking**, with an operating base in Malta, as defined in Section 3, may apply and will be eligible for funding subject to the terms and conditions laid out in this document and in particular the conditions for eligibility.

**Given the aims of the Research Networking Scheme, it is integral that any proposal that will be considered for funding, implements a scientific basis, and highlights the networking methodology to be conducted.**



#### 4.1 Eligibility for Participation

Kindly note that the **applying entity** must be a Maltese registered entity by the date of application submission.

With regards to Option A: Local Networking Scheme, where Malta – Foreign collaboration is taking place, with one of the researchers from the international entity being a Diaspora researcher, the following criteria are to be followed:

- The Diaspora researcher is a Maltese citizen and is currently living and working outside of Malta; or
- The Diaspora researcher is of Maltese descent and is currently living and working outside of Malta.

Any applicants that at the time of proposal submission are considered by Xjenza Malta to be non-compliant with respect to Grant Agreement obligations on other active projects funded by Xjenza Malta, may be immediately deemed ineligible at application stage or will not be awarded funding under this programme. For the purposes of this paragraph non-compliance with respect to Grant Agreement obligations shall also be deemed to include failure to respect approved project timelines on other projects funded by the Agency and circumstances where the applicant is in recognised default of Grant Agreement obligations on any other active project funded by the Agency. Similarly, should applicants become non-compliant during the call process, they will not be awarded funding under this programme.

Any application submitted by or including the participation of any legal person or legal entity having, in totality or in majority ownership, the same shareholders, partners or persons holding and/ or exercising a controlling power in any other legal entity which will have been at any time prior to such application declared as non-compliant or defaulting on any other contract or agreement entered into with Xjenza Malta, shall be automatically declared as inadmissible.

Funding under this scheme is made available on the basis that the applicant has not and will not benefit from any other grant or financial incentive of whatever nature, applied for and/or utilised for the same scope as that subject of the funding requested under this Programme. Provided that, in the case where the application covers work that is part of a larger project, the Beneficiary must submit a table as an appendix to the application form that shows a comprehensive list of the items of work and the source of funding for each item.



Beneficiaries under these Rules for Participation must understand that, should they be found to be in breach of the conditions of the applicable State Aid Regulation, the Managing Authority will enforce the retrieval of disbursed funds with interest, in part or in full, as the case may necessitate.

Xjenza Malta also reserves the right to terminate any applications that have followed in part or in full this State Aid (Option A) regime, should Xjenza Malta not be satisfied with the segregation of work packages, activities, tasks and deliverables, as well as budgets.

Eligible applicants under the **Local Networking Scheme (LNS)** must establish partnerships as follows:

- Malta–Malta Networking: with one or more Maltese-registered entities.
- Malta–Foreign Networking: with one or more international entities with a proven track record.

Funded activities must include a research component and promote local networking through at least one of the following:

- Organising seminars, workshops, training sessions, or conferences in Malta to foster collaboration among local and international research institutions and stakeholders.
- Carrying out joint activities that bring together multiple Maltese entities to exchange, develop, or apply expertise in research and innovation.
- Strengthening connections with Maltese researchers working or studying abroad to bridge knowledge and collaboration gaps.

Eligible applicants under the **International Networking Scheme (INS)** must partner up with one or more international entities with a proven track record of excellence and experience. The activities that that will be funded under this scheme should have a research element, while promoting international networking, through at least one of the following:

- the development of joint teaching curricula for Masters or PhD students.
- placements for local researchers in foreign institutions for the purposes of furthering research & innovation collaboration.
- the arrangement of strategic and targeted visits by local academics/researchers and representatives of private entities to foreign



entities in order to participate in research & innovation activities of an exploratory and developmental nature.

It is important to note that INS will fund only activities occurring internationally. If local activities are to be carried out these will fall under the Local Networking Scheme. Additionally, **travel to active war zones or regions with ongoing armed conflict, will not be funded under any circumstances** for safety and compliance reasons.

Eligible applicants under the **Open Access Journal Support** can apply for a grant to publish their research on an open access journal. The published research should be related to other research projects funded by Xjenza Malta. The article can be already submitted but **not published** prior to the signing of the Grant Agreement.

#### **4.2 Conflict of Interest**

Applicant/s and/or Beneficiary/ies shall take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective processing of their Application for funding, the awarding of the Grant or the supervision or the implementation of the Grant agreement could be compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other direct or indirect or perceived interest (conflict of interests).

Applicant/s and/or Beneficiary/ies shall formally notify the Managing Authority without delay of any situation constituting or likely to lead to an actual or perceived conflict of interest and immediately take all of the necessary steps to rectify this situation.

The Managing Authority may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

Where a beneficiary wilfully breaches any of its obligations under these Rules for Participation, this shall be deemed to constitute an Event of Default and the



Application may be deemed ineligible or the Grant awarded may be reduced and/or terminated.

## 5 **Applicability of the *de minimis* State Aid Regime**

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Assistance provided in line with these Rules for Participation will be granted in line with the terms and conditions of Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2831 of 13 December 2023<sup>1</sup> on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to *de minimis* aid (OJ L, 2023/2831, 15.12.2023) (hereinafter referred to as the *de minimis* Regulation)

The *de minimis* Regulation stipulates that **a single undertaking cannot receive more than €300,000 in *de minimis* aid over the applicable three (3)-year period**, including *de minimis* aid from measures offered by entities other than the Managing Authority. The three-year period is assessed on a rolling basis.

Applicants should ensure and declare that they are eligible for the requested grant under State Aid rules before applying.

Applicants will be required to submit a signed *de minimis* declaration indicating any *de minimis* aid received and/or applied for during the applicable three-year period. **In the case of successful applications, an updated declaration form shall be provided at the time of the signing of the Grant Agreement, ensuring that the applicant remains eligible for funding under this State Aid regime.**

Any *de minimis* aid received more than the established threshold will have to be recovered, with interest from the undertaking receiving the aid.

In line with Article 1 of the *de minimis* Regulation, no aid will be granted to the following undertakings and/or sectors, since these are expressly excluded from the scope of the *de minimis* Regulation:

- (a) aid granted to undertakings active in the primary production of fishery and aquaculture products;
- (b) aid granted to undertakings active in the processing and marketing of fishery and aquaculture products, where the amount of the aid is fixed on the basis of price or quantity of products purchased or put on the market;

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<sup>1</sup> More information available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/2831>



- (c) aid granted to undertakings active in the primary production of agricultural products;
- (d) aid granted to undertakings active in the processing and marketing of agricultural products, in one of the following cases:
- (i) where the amount of the aid is fixed on the basis of the price or quantity of such products purchased from primary producers or put on the market by the undertakings concerned;
  - (ii) where the aid is conditional on being partly or entirely passed on to primary producers;
- (e) aid granted to export-related activities towards third countries or Member States, namely aid directly linked to the quantities exported, the establishment and operation of a distribution network or other current expenditure linked to the export activity;
- (f) aid contingent upon the use of domestic goods and services over imported goods and services.

Where an undertaking is active in the sectors referred to in points (a), (b), (c) or (d) above, and is also active in one or more of the other sectors falling within the scope of the *de minimis* Regulation, or has other activities falling within the scope of the *de minimis* Regulation, the *de minimis* Regulation shall apply to aid granted in respect of the latter sectors or activities, provided that the Managing Authority ensures, by relying on appropriate means such as separation of activities or separation of accounts, that the activities in the sectors excluded from the scope of this Regulation do not benefit from the *de minimis* aid granted in accordance with this scheme.

The applicable rules on cumulation of aid as outlined in Article 5 of the *de minimis* Regulation will be respected.

In line with Article 6(1) of the *de minimis* Regulation, as of 1 January 2026, information on *de minimis* aid granted under this scheme shall be made publicly available in the central register.

The following information shall be made public:

- the identification of the beneficiary,



- the aid amount,
- the granting date,
- the aid instrument, and
- the sector involved on the basis of the statistical classification of economic activities in the Union ('NACE classification').

Applicants under these Rules for Participation must understand that, should they be found to be in breach of the applicable State aid rules, the Managing Authority will enforce the retrieval of disbursed funds with interest, in part or in full, as the case may necessitate.

## 6 The Application Process

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The Call for Project Proposals for Local and International Networking Scheme will be open for **eight weeks** between **02 February 2026** until the **30 March 2026**. **Proposals which are received after the deadline stipulated will be deemed administratively non-compliant.** The selection and funding of proposals under this Programme shall be on a competitive basis.

The Open Access Journal Support will be classified as an open call over the span of 1 year, starting **02 February 2026** to close on **02 February 2027**. The Open Access Journal Support will be awarded on a first come first served basis where 10 will be awarded or until funds are exhausted. Applicants can apply at the appropriate timeline to claim reimbursement not more than a year after award.

The Open Access Journal Support will close once all funds have been allocated. Additionally, the programme will temporarily close during the following periods:

- 30<sup>th</sup> June 2026 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2026
- 1<sup>st</sup> December 2026 to 9<sup>th</sup> January 2027

Applicants should refer to the eligibility criteria in Sections 4 and 5.

### 6.1 Application Submission

The RNS project application must present a coherent, comprehensive and credible plan based on:

- ✓ Reasonable estimates of finance, deliverables and timeframes; and



- ✓ Templates provided by Xjenza Malta.

The legal representative of the participating organisation of the applicant must either physically or electronically sign off the application and enter the date of signature. This individual must also sign off all relevant declarations found within the Appendices of the Application Form.

Submission, evaluation and selection of project applications will be in the form of a one-stage process. The applicant should ensure complete compliance with these 'Rules for Participation' prior to submission as no amendment or negotiations are allowed after submission unless otherwise stated by Xjenza Malta.

Where errors in the budget are noted during the evaluation process, these will be categorised by Xjenza Malta as **major deviations** (affecting 10% or over of the requested grant value or involving significant errors in required documentation) or **minor deviations** (affecting less than 10% of the requested grant value).

**Minor deviations will be corrected and administratively evaluated.** The Beneficiary will be given the opportunity to accept or decline proceeding with the project subject to the required amendments if the application is successful.

Major deviations will be identified by Xjenza Malta. Depending on the nature and severity of the deviation, the Beneficiary may be invited to address the issues within a period determined by the Managing Authority. **Failure to submit required corrections where rectification is permitted will result in the application being deemed administratively non-compliant and no longer eligible for consideration.** In cases where the deviation is fundamental or prevents proper evaluation of the application, **it may be deemed administratively non-compliant immediately.**

All administratively compliant applications shall be evaluated according to the procedure outlined under Section 11 of these Rules for Participation. The application process is a **single stage**, which does not allow modifications once submission has been made, nor does it allow negotiations on the content of the proposals unless otherwise stated by Xjenza Malta. **The content of the Application Form and these rules for participation will be directly appended to the Grant Agreements for successful applicants and will constitute the Grant Agreement technical obligations.**



Any text or appendices within the submitted application, that go beyond the prescribed maximum word count and/or page limits, shall be **disregarded in the scientific evaluation process**.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that a confirmation of receipt is provided.

## 6.2 Submission Documents

All Submissions for the Networking Scheme must include:

- ✓ **The application form in MS Word (.docx) format and a signed scanned copy** (to be sent by email)
  - A precise plan of project activities, timeframes, and deliverables.
  - A detailed plan of how Beneficiary's knowledge and, where applicable subcontractors or collaborators, will be used to perform the project tasks and to achieve the project
- ✓ The **Detailed budget breakdown form (.xlsx)**<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ **Curricula Vitae** of principle investigator/s from local **and** partner institution/s
- ✓ **Letters of support** provided by all partner institutions, confirming any matching or additional funding.
- ✓ **Self-declaration form** in the case of Diaspora Researcher
- ✓ **Agenda of events, activities, training etc.**
- ✓ **Profile of potential partners**
- ✓ The **signed de minimis State Aid Declaration Form** (An updated *de minimis* State Aid Declaration form is to be submitted upon the signing of the Grant Agreement should the project be selected for funding, as well as declarations on Indirect State Aid).
- ✓ **Signed additional declarations** (found within application).

All Submissions for the Open Access Journal Support must include:

- ✓ **The application form in MS Word (.docx) format and a signed scanned copy** (to be sent by email)
- ✓ **Curricula Vitae** of principle investigator/s

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<sup>2</sup> To be downloaded from the Xjenza Malta [resource page](#)



- ✓ The **signed *de minimis* State Aid Declaration Form** (An updated *de minimis* State Aid Declaration form is to be submitted upon the signing of the Grant Agreement should the project be selected for funding, as well as declarations on Indirect State Aid).
- ✓ **Signed additional declarations** (found within application).

**Amendments to the forms are not permitted following the submission deadline of the application and the consensus result would be final.**

The additional documentation to be submitted for this call can be found on the Xjenza Malta resource page here: <https://xjenzamalta.mt/resources-page/>

It should be noted that large emails may be automatically rejected by the system. The applicant may make use of cloud storage or mass file transfer systems (e.g., WeTransfer). **It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that application documents are sent out successfully.** All received applications shall be acknowledged by email. **Proposals which are received after the deadline stipulated for the Networking scheme will be deemed administratively non-compliant. Incomplete Networking scheme applications which are not received by Xjenza Malta as of 30<sup>th</sup> March 2026 (23:59 CET) (excluding The Open Access Journal Support) will not be considered. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that a confirmation of receipt is provided.**

**The open access support scheme will be in the form of an open call until funds are exhausted. There will be one period in the year when the call will be closed;**

- **July 31<sup>st</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup>**
- **December 1<sup>st</sup> to January 9<sup>th</sup>**

Application Forms should be sent electronically to [networking.xjenzamalta@gov.mt](mailto:networking.xjenzamalta@gov.mt) keeping Mrs. Rachel De Bono ([rachel.de-bono@gov.mt](mailto:rachel.de-bono@gov.mt)) and Ms. Enya-Marie Haber ([enya-maria.haber@gov.mt](mailto:enya-maria.haber@gov.mt)) in copy, with "Research Networking Scheme 2026 Application Submission" as a subject.



## 6.3 Considerations at Application Stage

### 6.3.1 Respecting Lead Times

All organisations, including Xjenza Malta, have their internal procedures for processing, approving and signing off on legally binding documents. Beneficiaries are to ensure that they are aware of these lead times in their organisation as well as in the other organisations which may be involved. It is the applicant's responsibility to ask for information on lead times pertaining to Xjenza Malta.

Applicants should also consider personal commitments, vacation leave etc, when planning to submit an application. All project application submissions, which must reach Xjenza Malta by the deadline, must be dated, signed and initialised (stamped or signed) by the applicant's legal representative and must include signatures of the legal representatives of each respective participating organisation. **All project application submissions must reach Xjenza Malta by no later than 23:59PM (CET) on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2026 (excluding The Open Access Journal Support).**

### 6.3.2 Assistance with Applications

Prospective Project Applicants are encouraged to seek the advice of Xjenza Malta in the preparation of the project application. This should help identify any areas of concern prior to the submission of the application and lead to a better quality of submission. Advice shall only be given in respect to these Rules for Participation and not on technical grounds. **Applicants are particularly encouraged to seek Xjenza Malta's guidance through proposal-specific one-to-one sessions to ensure that the single-stage application documentation is complete and effective, as once submitted, it cannot be edited.** One-to-one sessions and correspondences seeking advice should be done latest one week before the closing date for this call.

## 7 Confidentiality of Submissions

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All project application submissions shall be treated in the strictest confidence.

Without prejudice to the generality of the above it is only the name of the entity, the Principle Investigator, the title of proposal and the abstract which may in the course of the process be published.



The collection of data by Xjenza Malta through the application for aid under the Programme, submitted by the Applicant and the subsequent processing of said data by Xjenza Malta to evaluate the data subject's request for aid under the Programme and the storage of said data shall at all times be in accordance with:

- i. The provisions of these Rules for Participation;
- ii. Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2831 of 13 December 2023<sup>3</sup> on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to *de minimis* aid (the *de minimis* Regulation).
- iii. Data Protection Act (CAP 586 of the Laws of Malta) and Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 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).
- iv. 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'.

Further information may be found within the Application Form.

## 8 Programme Parameters

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Xjenza Malta reserves the right to carry out financial and/or technical audits at its discretion, at any time during the duration of the project to ensure that Programme Parameters, as per contractual obligations are being observed.

### 8.1 Project Start Date and Duration

The project must start by at least 1<sup>st</sup> August 2026 or as **otherwise stated by Xjenza Malta**. The project must be implemented across a **12-month period**, without the possibility of an extension.

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<sup>3</sup> More information available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/2831>



## 8.2 Project Grant

The maximum possible grant value for a project is **€8,000** for The Local and International Networking Schemes, but when applying with a Maltese Diaspora Researcher a top-up of **€2,000** will be provided.

In the case of the Open Access Journal Support the maximum possible grant value is **€4,000** per project.

The de minimis aid to be received by every successful applicant under these Rules for Participation shall include all approved eligible costs for that entity at a maximum aid intensity of 100%, as mentioned in Section 9.

## 8.3 Deliverables

Deliverables are tangible outcomes of the project and must be submissible. They must be proposed between the start date and end date of the project. Deliverables not within the project timelines will not be considered. If the project is awarded, evidence should be submitted for each deliverable mentioned in the application form to ensure that it has been attained successfully.

Successful applicants are required to submit a detailed report on the activities undertaken to the Managing Authority within thirty (30) days from the date of completion of the activities funded by the Award. Xjenza Malta reserves the right to take any necessary legal action should such reporting not be submitted.

### 8.3.1 Mandatory Deliverables

The Beneficiary must provide a final report with the following documents:

- Submit an **End of Project Technical Report**.
- Submit an **End of Project Financial Report**.
- Submit all relevant **Financial Documents** such as:
  - boarding passes
  - flight confirmation (receipt version where the amount paid is shown)
  - travel insurance receipt



- venue hire receipt
- catering receipt
- subcontracting of specialised personnel
- information and dissemination material receipts
- remittance (this is proof of subsistence from UM)
- proof of subsistence
- conference registrations receipt
- All other relevant **receipts**
- The following document types should not be submitted as financial documents
  - Quotations from various suppliers
  - Bank Transfers/Statements
- Submit a **Copy of the Publication** in an open access journal along with the relevant receipts when awarded the Open Access Journal Support

### 8.3.2 Naming Convention of Deliverables

The financial documents submitted need to follow the below naming convention. When these are not adhered to, the documents will be sent back to the beneficiaries for them to be properly labelled. Mislabelled documents will not be accepted, and the project will not be declared closed until all required documents are received in accordance with these Rules for Participation.

The naming of the receipts and financial documents required should follow the following structure:

**Full Name of Individual\_Expense Type\*\_Amount Paid**

\*When a Boarding Pass is indicated, the naming of the file should also include the departure and destination of the boarding pass. For example:

**John Doe\_Boarding Pass\_Malta to Dublin\_Dublin to Malta\_235 Euro**



When the document is in relation to hosting expenses such as venue hire, catering etc., the following convention is to be followed:

**Name of Supplier\_Expense Type\_Amount Paid**

The Reports must include sufficient evidence on the achievement of the project objectives, as well as the parameters indicated in the application, and they must be provided in accordance with the templates presented to the Principal Investigator by Xjenza Malta.

The **Project Financial Report and the Project Technical Report** must be submitted **within one month from the completion of the project** to account for lead times in the lifetime of the project.

Any changes to the project objectives, work-packages or any other parameter committed to in the application, are to be communicated in writing with clear justification to the Managing Authority prior to the deadline. The written request will be referred to the Unit Director for approval. Xjenza Malta will acknowledge receipt and endeavour to reply in a timely manner so that the momentum of the project remains unaffected.

Acceptance or otherwise of any changes shall be at the sole discretion of Xjenza Malta and its decision shall be binding, final and irrevocable. Any other communication shall not be considered valid or binding.

## 9 Eligible Costs

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Eligible direct costs are those costs incurred directly by the applicant during the lifetime of the project, and which are primarily used for the purpose of achieving the objectives of the project. **All eligible expenses must be incurred between the Start Date and the End Date of the Project** and must be limited to the budgeted value.

### 9.1 Local Networking Scheme Eligible Costs

#### 9.1.1 Malta-Malta Networking

The **Eligible Direct Costs** are:



**Venue Hire:** Eligible costs include the rental of conference rooms, lecture halls, meeting spaces, and other facilities required for the execution of the event. Applicants may not claim venue hire expenses if the venue is owned or managed by the applicant entity or by any partner directly involved in the project. All venue hire costs must be fully supported by the relevant receipts. **(capped at 50% of project value)**

**Catering Services:** Eligible catering costs include the provision of meals, coffee breaks, light refreshments, and networking receptions directly linked to the funded event. Catering expenses must be duly justified within the event budget and supported by official invoices clearly itemising the services provided. **(capped at 50% of project value)**

**Specialised Event Personnel:** This category covers the fees of subcontracted professionals required to support the delivery of the event. Eligible roles include, but are not limited to, translators, interpreters, audio-visual technicians, moderators, event facilitators, or other specialists directly engaged in event delivery. Costs must be directly attributable to the event and substantiated with appropriate contracts and invoices.

**Informational Materials:** This category covers costs aimed at increasing visibility, engagement, and dissemination of the event to relevant audiences. Eligible costs may include media articles, press releases, digital and print advertising, social media campaigns, and promotional content tailored to the event. Expenses must remain proportionate to the scale of the activity and directly linked to the objectives of the event. Expenditure on branding or general marketing not tied to the funded activity **shall not be eligible**. All costs must be supported by appropriate documentation, such as advertising receipts, contracts, and campaign reports.

**Renting of Equipment:** Eligible costs include the rental of audio-visual, technical, or other equipment required for the successful delivery of the event. This may include projectors, microphones, sound systems, video-conferencing tools, lighting equipment, or similar items needed for the planned activities. All rentals must be directly tied to the event and used solely for its duration. Equipment owned or managed by the applicant or its partners cannot be claimed. Supporting documentation must clearly outline the equipment rented and the period of use.

**5% Administrative Costs:** Final receipts should be properly labelled, organised and relevant. If this is not the case, the 5% administrative fees will be reverted to Xjenza Malta.



## 9.1.2 Malta-Foreign Networking (including with Diaspora Researcher)

The **Eligible Direct Costs** are:

**Venue Hire:** Eligible costs include the rental of conference rooms, lecture halls, meeting spaces, and other facilities required for the execution of the event. Applicants may not claim venue hire expenses if the venue is owned or managed by the applicant entity or by any partner directly involved in the project. All venue hire costs must be fully supported by the relevant receipts. **(capped at 50% of project value)**

**Catering Services:** Eligible catering costs include the provision of meals, coffee breaks, light refreshments, and networking receptions directly linked to the funded event. Catering expenses must be duly justified within the event budget and supported by official invoices clearly itemising the services provided. **(capped at 50% of project value)**

**Specialised Event Personnel:** This category covers the fees of subcontracted professionals required to support the delivery of the event. Eligible roles include, but are not limited to, translators, interpreters, audio-visual technicians, moderators, event facilitators, or other specialists directly engaged in event delivery. Costs must be directly attributable to the event and substantiated with appropriate contracts and invoices.

**Informational Materials:** This category covers costs aimed at increasing visibility, engagement, and dissemination of the event to relevant audiences. Eligible costs may include media articles, press releases, digital and print advertising, social media campaigns, and promotional content tailored to the event. Expenses must remain proportionate to the scale of the activity and directly linked to the objectives of the event. Expenditure on branding or general marketing not tied to the funded activity **shall not be eligible**. All costs must be supported by appropriate documentation, such as advertising receipts, contracts, and campaign reports.

**Renting of Equipment:** Eligible costs include the rental of audio-visual, technical, or other equipment required for the successful delivery of the event. This may include projectors, microphones, sound systems, video-conferencing tools, lighting equipment, or similar items needed for the planned activities. All rentals must be directly tied to the event and used solely for its duration. Equipment owned or managed by the applicant or its partners cannot be claimed. Supporting documentation must clearly outline the equipment rented and the period of use.



**Flights:** Flights must be related to flights for international or diaspora partners for an event being carried out in Malta. Flights should not exceed more than €1,000 for EU countries and €2,000 for non-EU countries per flight and should be an economy class ticket.

**Travel insurance:** this is obligatory with all flights funded by the RNS grant

**Subsistence Allowance:** this includes accommodation and travel from and to the airport.

**5% Administrative Costs:** Final receipts should be properly labelled, organised and relevant. If this is not the case, the 5% administrative fees will be reverted to Xjenza Malta.

## 9.2 International Networking Scheme Eligible Costs

The **Eligible Direct Costs** are:

**Flights:** Flights must be related to flights for Maltese based researchers involved with one of the applying entities for an event being carried out outside of Malta. Flights should not exceed more than €1,000 for EU countries and €2,000 for non-EU countries per flight and should be an economy class ticket.

**Travel insurance:** this is obligatory with all flights funded by the RNS grant.

**Subsistence Allowance:** this includes accommodation and travel from and to the airport.

**Conference Registration Fees.**

**5% Administrative Costs:** Final receipts should be properly labelled, organised and relevant. If this is not the case, the 5% administrative fees will be reverted to Xjenza Malta.

## 9.3 The Open Access Journal Support

The **Eligible Direct Cost** is:

**Publication in an open access journal:** This is limited to one publication per grant.



## 9.4 Ineligible Costs

The non-exhaustive list below demonstrates examples of ineligible costs:

- ✓ Consumables
- ✓ Internal Personnel
- ✓ Equipment
- ✓ Internal Invoices (invoices issued by the beneficiary (e.g. to hire their own venue))
- ✓ Expenses related to travel and subsistence for the international partners when events are held abroad (for the International Networking Scheme)
- ✓ Expenses related to loans, interest, etc
- ✓ Recoverable value added tax (VAT)
- ✓ Expenses which are recoverable through other funding mechanisms

**Kindly note that this is a non-exhaustive list, and any line items not seen to be compliant with the nature of the Research Networking Scheme, will not be deemed as eligible costs and will be subtracted from the grant requested.**

In the event a cost which is not clearly ineligible/eligible is to be proposed, kindly contact Xjenza Malta for clarification. Any clarification is to be performed at least 2 working days prior to the submission deadline.

## 9.5 Aid Intensity

The Programme's financial contribution to a beneficiary applying for *de minimis aid* is up to a maximum of **100% of eligible costs incurred** as long as the maximum grant threshold is not exceeded.

## 9.6 Collaborators

Should the applicant have any collaborators these must be included in the application form. The expected contribution/s by the said collaborators should be stated and



supported by a **letter of support**. These collaborators may be foreign or local. **They are not eligible to receive funding through this proposal.**

The respective letter of support should be composed within the last three months before the deadline of the application.

## 10 Double Funding

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Funding under this Programme is made available on the basis that the applicant would not have benefited and will not benefit from any other grant or financial incentive of whatever nature, applied for and/or utilised for the same scope as that subject of the funding requested under this Programme. Provided that, in the case where the application covers work that is part of a larger project, the applicant must submit a table as an appendix to the application form that shows a comprehensive list of the items of work and the source of funding for each item.

By signing the Grant Agreement, Beneficiaries are automatically accepting and authorising Xjenza Malta to exchange essential information related to the project with other funding agencies, both local and overseas, for any necessary checks. Any occurrence of double funding should be communicated in writing to the Unit Director prior to the signing of the Grant Agreement.

## 11 Evaluation

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Project applications will be evaluated through a three-step process. Primarily, projects will undergo an administrative compliance evaluation. At this stage, if any errors with the budget are noted, these will either be considered as a major deviation or a minor deviation (kindly refer to Section 6.1 for further guidance).

If successful, projects will be forwarded to three external evaluators for External Evaluation.

The projects will be ranked alternating from the next highest ranked project from LNS to highest ranked project from INS starting from LNS until the funds are consumed. For clarity, the order of awards will be as follows (subject to the availability of funds):

1. Top ranked project for LNS



2. Top ranked project for INS
3. Second ranked project for LNS
4. Second ranked project for INS

INS applications will also be streamlined as follows:

1. Top ranked project under option A
2. Top ranked project under option B

The pattern will continue until all funds, or eligible project, are exhausted.

The Managing Authority may undertake a Due Diligence exercise through its contractors for the purpose of administrative compliance. Further assurances and documentation, such as bank guarantees, may be required at the discretion of the Managing Authority. In the event that the Due Diligence assessment established a high exposure risk to the Managing Authority, the application will be rejected, or further assurances may be requested from the applicant for the application to remain under consideration.

For a project to be successful it must pass from all three-steps.

Changes to the submitted proposal are not allowed prior to the Grant Agreement, unless requested and/or approved by the Managing Authority.

## 11.1 Evaluation Criteria

**In the case of the Networking Scheme (i.e. the collaborative portion of the scheme) the following criteria will apply:**

- **Excellence, Quality of Project/Activity (40%):** Threshold 30%
- **Implementation (30%):** Threshold 15%:
- **Impact, Outcomes and Sustainability (30%):** Threshold 20%

Failure to achieve **a minimum of 65% pass** from External Evaluation will lead to rejection of the proposal. For a project to be successful it must pass from all criteria.



Priority will be given to well-defined proposals which demonstrates increased odds of success for securing third party-funding or which demonstrate a clear benefit to enhancing the international dimension of local research & innovation activity.

**In the case of the Open Access Journal Support the following criteria will apply:**

**Excellence** of the proposed project idea to be published on the open access journal -  
**30% (Threshold 20%)**

- Novelty of the research idea or approach.
- Relevance of the proposed project to the goals of the open-access journal.
- Significance of the research question or problem being addressed and coherence in the presentation of ideas and logical flow of the proposal including research objectives.

**Impact Factor - 50% (Threshold 35%)**

- Reputation and credibility of the open-access journal/s in the relevant field.
- Consistency and quality of publications in the journal/s.
- Reach and dissemination of research published in the journal/s, including citations and readership.
- Inclusion of the journal in reputable indexing services (e.g., PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science).
- Journal metrics such as the Impact Factor, Eigenfactor, and h-index.

**Likelihood of publication in the intended journal/s - 20% (Threshold 10%)**

- Alignment of the proposed project with the scope and focus areas of the intended journal.
- Track record of the researchers/authors in publishing in similar journals.
- The status of the publication.



Failure to achieve a minimum of 65% pass from External Evaluation will lead to rejection of the proposal. For a project to be successful it must pass from all criteria.

### **Other considerations:**

In the event that two or more projects obtain the same mark following evaluation, then Xjenza Malta shall give priority to that project which provides the best consideration to:

- ✓ the implementation of gender equality in the research project

## **12 Post Selection Process**

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### **12.1 The Grant Agreement**

Following the successful evaluation of the application, the Beneficiary will be invited to sign a Grant Agreement establishing the terms and conditions governing the financing of the project. The Grant Agreement will include the original project proposal as an annex. The beneficiary will be expected to execute the project in line with the original proposal. The Project Application including but not limited to milestones, compliance and reporting obligations, as well as any relevant legal agreements, shall constitute an integral part of the Grant Agreement as will the rules for participation.

Hard copies of the Grant Agreement must be signed by the beneficiary within two (2) weeks from the date of receipt. Where a legal representative is not available a proxy should sign. Failure to comply with the stipulated timeframe may result in a withdrawal of the offer for funding.

Together with the signed copies of the Grant Agreement, the Principal Investigator must provide an abstract of the project. This may be used, in-part or in-whole, by Xjenza Malta to publicise or externalise the award of funds. No proprietary intellectual property should be included in this draft.

### **12.2 Start Date and End Date**

The project will start on a pre-determined date as agreed by all the respective parties and as stipulated in the Grant Agreement.



**To be eligible for funding, all expenses must be incurred between the Start Date and the End Date of the Project.**

Between the Agreement Date and the Start Date, the Beneficiary should ensure that all activities required for a smooth project start are completed. These may include but not limited to:

- ✓ obtaining quotations for procurement purposes

## **13 Funding, Management and Progress Monitoring**

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### **13.1 Allocation and Disbursement of Funding**

For the purposes of funding and reporting, a project submission shall be considered to be a single stage period of up to **12-months**.

The total financial contribution by the Managing Authority over the lifetime of the project shall not exceed the funding limit as established in the Grant Agreement, irrespective of actual expenditure.

The funding will be allocated as below:

- Local Networking Scheme and International Networking Scheme: The full grant will be disbursed as pre-financing.
- Open Access Journal Support: The grant will be provided on a reimbursement basis.

Underspends are retrieved by Xjenza Malta following the financial report. In the case of overpayment, the applicant will be required to refund the under-spent amount to the Managing Authority within a specific timeframe, or as agreed to with the Managing Authority.

### **13.2 Reporting & Audit**

As indicated in Section 3, the Principal Investigator will be required to submit an End of Project Technical Report and a Final Financial Report to the Managing Authority with details of actual expenditure. Both reports must be approved by the Managing Authority before the official closing of the project.



Technical and financial reports should be submitted at the end of the project by the Principal Investigator. The latter should contain details of actual expenditure over the past reporting period.

The End of Project Technical Report should include an account of the activities and achievements carried out throughout the reporting period as compared with the contents of the application (and/or additional annexes within the Grant Agreement outlining the tasks and deliverables of the beneficiary) as originally submitted. This should follow the template provided by Xjenza Malta.

The End of Project Financial Report must contain a detailed account of the actual expenditure disbursed for the entirety of project.

The End of Project Financial Report shall be submitted up to 30 days from the stipulated end of project date.

The Managing Authority may at any time request supplementary information and documentation on the projects. The Managing Authority may make such additional enquiries into a project as deemed necessary. Any required documentation not submitted within Final Reports, or documentation not submitted within the specified timeframes, may render the whole project ineligible, and may result in the Managing Authority recovering all funds disbursed across the project. If the project is found to be in breach of the Grant Agreement or to materially depart from the submitted application, the Managing Authority reserves the right to discontinue the award, and the beneficiary may be required to refund the Grant in part or in full. In any such event, the Managing Authority may also exclude a beneficiary from participating in future calls.

Templates for any mandatory reports will be provided with the grant agreement.

### **13.3 Transfer of funds**

Applicants should note that:

- Transfers of project funds between line items **over the duration of the project** that are **cumulatively less than 20% of the grant value are automatically eligible** provided that:
  - i. the limits mentioned in the Rules for Participation in Section 9 are adhered to



- ii. expenses are exclusively used throughout the project lifetime to the sole benefit of the project
- iii. requested costs should be eligible as per Rules for Participation
- Should transfers of project funds between line items are **cumulatively greater than 20% of the grant value, these will be considered as significant alterations to the proposal and will not be eligible.**

Kindly note that with respect to transfer of project funds, these should be reflected in the Project Financial Report.

**Kindly note that the structure of the line items will be as follows:**

- Transfers between different budget categories will always contribute to the 20% limit.

Kindly note that the term 'own line item' refers to a whole budget category whereas 'single line item' refers to one individual line item within a budget category.

### **13.4 Accountability**

As a condition, the Beneficiary shall open a dedicated project bank account with a banking institution of repute, in the name of the Beneficiary, designated by the Project Grant Agreement Number, denominated in Euro. Grant payments by the Managing Authority, as well as any co-financing from Beneficiaries, shall be deposited into the Project Account. The Beneficiary shall only use this account for the payment of expenses incurred in connection with the Project, provided such expenses are authorised and allowed in terms of these Rules and the Grant Agreement. The Beneficiary shall not encumber the Project Account in any way whatsoever, and without limitation to the generality of the foregoing, the Grant shall not be made subject to any hypothec, pledge or any other form of security guarantee. Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing provision, the following shall apply:

"The Managing Authority reserves the right to grant permission, in writing, to one or more Beneficiaries, to waive the obligations of said Beneficiary/s mentioned in Section 6.1. Provided that where the Managing Authority provides its written permission to one or more of the Beneficiaries to proceed without the opening of a Project Account, the Beneficiary/ies are to ensure that all Project transactions bear appropriate analysis codes to enable the clear distinction between Project transactions and other



operational transactions. The Managing Authority reserves the right to order the refunding of any disbursed funds that have not been accounted for in this manner.”

The Managing Authority reserves the right to order the refunding of any disbursed funds that have not been accounted for in the above manner. The Lead Beneficiary’s Project Account, or bank account is to be used in accordance with this Article’s provisions, is stated in the Grant Agreement.

Eligible expenses must have been determined in accordance with the usual accounting and management principles and practices of the beneficiary. Direct eligible costs must be backed up with the relevant documentation as specified in the Grant Agreement.

### **13.5 Dissemination and Externalisation**

All dissemination and publication of information in relation to the proposal selected for award is to commence following the signing of the Grant Agreement.

Any literature, articles and text material published in relation to the completion of tasks proposed in the project should include the words:

**‘Project <project name> <project acronym> financed by Xjenza Malta through the Research Networking Scheme 2026.’**

This acknowledgement will need to be included on any dissemination material submitted to Xjenza Malta to be considered as fulfilling the obligations of the grant agreement. Dissemination related deliverables which do not have this acknowledgement will not be accepted.

In the case where printed material is published without a mention of the Research Networking Scheme and Xjenza Malta, the beneficiary shall be obliged to publish a correction at its own expense in the subsequent issue of the publication. This is also applicable for published material produced by persons who are not the beneficiary. In the case where such publicity does not mention the Research Networking Scheme and Xjenza Malta, associated costs will be considered ineligible.

The Managing Authority reserves the right to request that the beneficiary participates in any Research Conferences or Events to disseminate the project results and the experience in obtaining funding from the Managing Authority.



The Beneficiaries shall always cooperate with the Managing Authority in promoting the Programme by presenting the Awarded Project or through other reasonable means, as requested by the Managing Authority

## **14 Supervening Circumstances**

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The Principal Investigator is obliged to immediately advise the Unit Director, of any internal or extraneous significant event which might affect the validity or implementation of the project. This obligation applies to the entire period between the submission of the preliminary project application and the completion of the project.

Xjenza Malta shall acknowledge receipt within five (5) working days. The reply will either give such directives as it deems necessary for the furtherance on the project or re-assess the project in its entirety accordingly.

Failure on the part of the Principal Investigator to respect this obligation may be deemed by Xjenza Malta to constitute material non-compliance on the part of the Beneficiary and Xjenza Malta may thereafter take such action as is necessary in terms of the Grant Agreement in consequence of such non-compliance.

### **14.1 Default**

Where the implementation of a project becomes impossible or implementation is not completed, the Managing Authority shall be entitled to take any action it deems necessary, including, but not limited to, the withdrawal of funding for the project and the collection of refunds of money already paid out. A similar course of action may be followed if a project is in default as a result of not meeting one or more of its obligations in terms of the Grant Agreement.

In the event of default on the part of the Beneficiary the Managing Authority may issue a written notice to the Beneficiary outlining the default, the corrective action to be taken and granting a rectification period of one month. The Managing Authority may also issue a second written notice of default granting a rectification period in respect of the same default.



## 15 Interpretation of Rules

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This document endeavours to establish comprehensive and clear rules governing participation in this initiative. However, should circumstances arise where the rules are inadequate, unclear, ambiguous, or conflicting, Xjenza Malta shall exercise its discretion in the interpretation of the rules or will extrapolate the rules as necessary through the setting up of an ad hoc committee. These current Rules repeal any Rules previously issued and constitute exclusively the entire Rules issued by the Xjenza Malta.

These current Rules repeal any Rules previously issued and constitute exclusively the entire Rules issued by the Managing Authority.

In the event of a conflict between the Grant Agreement and these Rules for Participation, the Grant Agreement shall take precedence.