

Spark impact ²⁰²⁴

A Frontline Innovation Initiative



Office of the Nursing and Midwifery Services Director



NATIONAL
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TRAINING
& PLANNING



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Office of the Nursing and
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Introduction

The Spark Innovation Programme is delighted to introduce **Spark Impact**, an initiative designed to promote innovation among frontline staff. This initiative offers funding from **€5,000** to **€90,000**. Applicants must select a **tier of funding** which is most appropriate to their specific need and stage of their project (see below).

3 Tiers of Funding

Fund A €5,000 - 20,000

Fund B €20,000 - 50,000

Fund C €50,000 - 90,000

Types of Applications Sought

Applications are sought from frontline healthcare professionals (Consultants, NCHDs, Nurses, Midwives and Health & Social Care Professionals) from across all disciplines and Health Regions in Ireland.

We welcome applications which are at the **concept stage**, are being **piloted** or are already at the **implementation stage**. Above all, we are looking for individuals and teams who have the passion and drive to deliver positive change through innovation.

Applications should emphasise the following:

1. Identification of a clear **unmet need**
2. **Impact** on the Health Service
3. **Innovation** and Novelty
4. **Team** and Collaboration
5. Potential for **Scalability** and Transferability
6. Provides a **Return on Investment** (better health outcomes, better value care, better patient experience or better staff experiences)

Categories of Spark Impact Projects

We are particularly interested in funding projects that relate to the priority areas listed below. However, we also welcome applications for projects that address other areas of unmet need.

- Preventative & Screening Services
- Mental Health
- Children's Health
- Integrated Urgent and Emergency Care
- Access to Care / Waiting List Initiatives (Community & Acute Care)
- Climate Change & Sustainability
- Disability Services

Projects seeking funding for a personnel resource must be associated with a novel or innovative position or service offering. Applications for WTE to support existing services will not be accepted.

Funding is available to cover the costs of human resources to implement the project. For example, engaging with a designer, engineer or project lead to assist with an aspect of the implementation of the project.

Projects that require an ongoing staff resource may also be included in the application to the SPARK Impact Fund, however, the application must outline the plans for the sustainability of the project beyond the funding period.

Please note hiring of staff is subject to HSE recruitment instructions at the time.

Applications must be made via the online application portal by 22nd March 2024. Please follow the [link here](#)

Background

In the ever-changing healthcare landscape, frontline innovation is paramount to enhancing patient outcomes, streamlining processes, and ultimately, improving the overall delivery of healthcare services.

Following the success of initiatives such as 'The Hospital Innovation Fund' and 'The Community Innovation Fund', we are delighted to launch **SPARK Impact** to consolidate and build on these previous funding calls.

This initiative is designed to empower healthcare organisations to pilot or implement novel ideas that have the potential to significantly improve healthcare delivery. At SPARK, we believe that fostering a culture of innovation is not only essential for addressing current challenges but is also instrumental in preparing the healthcare sector for future demands.

Applicants will be able to apply for funding on a once-off basis to implement novel initiatives that will enhance the experience of health service users and providers. These projects will ideally be **collaborative, scalable and transferable** to the national stage.

Features of Applications Sought

Applications are sought from frontline healthcare workers from across all disciplines, public hospitals and Community Health Organisations in Ireland.

Applications should aim to highlight the following features where applicable:

Identification of a clear unmet need

- Clearly defined scope including the target population and healthcare need
- Identification of gaps and limitations in the current system
- Engagement with all relevant stakeholders

Impact on the health service

- Improved patient experience and care
- Improved healthcare provider experience
- Increased service capacity
- Alignment with corporate strategy

Innovation and novelty

- Projects that introduce a new service/process/device to your hospital
- Projects that introduce new and emerging technologies
- Cycles of testing and iteration are used to optimise the project

Team and Collaboration

- The initiative involves cross-disciplinary collaboration
- Health service users have been involved in its development
- The project involves new or unusual partnerships and collaborations with external bodies/organisations
- The project breaks down traditional silos

Potential for Scalability and Transferability

- The project can be adapted for use in other areas
- The project can be scaled up or transferred within your hospital, between hospitals or across the health service

Provides a Return on Investment

- Better health outcomes, better value care, better patient experience or better staff experiences
- Potential to reduce costs and deliver a return on investment
- Explain the data points/Key Performance Indicators which will be used to demonstrate that change has been effected
- Outline how the project will be supported after the funding process has been completed

Application Process

1	Design Thinking Workshop 14th February 0930 — 1300 or 13th March 0930 — 1300
2	Online Application Submission Opens: 6th February 2024 Closes: 22nd March 2024
3	Selection of High Potential Projects For each funding level, the projects with the most potential will be selected for the next steps.
4	Support Phase Specific feedback and support for projects depending on their needs.
5	Pitch Event Teams go through a final pitch event and selection with a panel of innovation experts
6	Project Commencement Funding subject to completion of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

1. Design Thinking Workshop

Prior to submission, at least one team member should attend Part 1 of a free [Design Thinking Workshop](#) (click to apply). The project assessment team will look favourably on applications where this step has been taken.

Prior attendance at this workshop via other SPARK initiatives is accepted, although we would encourage all team members to avail of this opportunity if they have not done so recently.

2. Online Application

Applications are open from the **6th February 2024** and will close on the **22nd March 2024**. All applications must be submitted via the [online portal](#) (click to apply).

While the application may be led by any clinician employed by the HSE, collaboration is highly encouraged. It is anticipated that applicants might apply on behalf of a multidisciplinary team including Doctors, Nurses, Midwives and Health and Social Care Professionals. The involvement of health service users in project design and implementation will also strengthen applications. Input from other organisations is also encouraged.

3. Selection of High Potential Projects

At each funding level (see funding section) projects with the **most potential** will be selected for the next stage (see marking scheme). Therefore applicants should carefully consider the level of funding for which they are applying, and ensure that this matches with their expected outcomes and Return on Investment.

4. Support Phase

Successful applicants/teams from Stage 2 will be invited to continue their journey with SPARK support and mentorship.

In this phase, support will be offered to applicants depending on their needs. Support phase represents our commitment to ensuring that each supported project undergoes a thorough and thoughtful preparation phase, setting the stage for success as it moves from conception to execution.

5. Pitch

After validating their solutions, teams will have the opportunity to a panel of experts in healthcare innovation. The final selection of projects that will be funded will take place at this stage.

Pitch training sessions are currently available ([click here](#) to apply).

6. Project Commencement

Successful applicants/teams will be required to complete a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) before transfer of funds. During the project, participants will have continued access and support to SPARK's network and partners, including design expertise.

Eligibility

Healthcare professionals from both HSE and Section 38 services can apply for this initiative.

On receipt of your application, your proposal will be checked for eligibility. Please note that incomplete or ineligible applications will be rejected without further consideration.

Applicants will need to confirm that they have discussed their proposed project/idea with an appropriate senior manager at application stage. Signed approval from your CEO, Deputy CEO, Operations Manager or equivalent will be required as part of the Memorandum of Agreement for funded projects.

This initiative is not to be considered a substitute source of funding for certain proposals e.g. funding of a job post, funding of routine equipment, general renovations etc. Where other sources of funding have been identified, The Spark Innovation Programme may consult the parties involved in relation to this scheme to ensure alignment and avoidance of duplication.

Funding

There are separate tiers of funding available:

- A. Between €5,000 — €20,000
- B. Between €20,000 — €50,000
- C. Between €50,000 — €90,000

Funding will be allocated based on the potential for the project to positively impact patients, healthcare providers and the health service. It will also be awarded based on the degree of collaboration involved and the potential for the innovation to diffuse throughout the health service.

Allocated funds must be drawn down within 6 months of signing the Memorandum of Agreement.

Marking Scheme

Eligible projects will be considered by a panel of experts from the SPARK Innovation Team who will assess your application based on the following assessment criteria:

Criteria	Description	Marks Available
MS1	Identification of a clear unmet need	25
MS2	Impact on the health service	25
MS3	Innovation and Novelty	20
MS4	Team and Collaboration	10
MS5	Potential for Scalability and Transferability	10
MS6	Provides a significant Return on Investment (ROI)	10

Submissions that receive a score of at least **70/100** will progress onto the next stage.

Successful Applicants

After completion of the pitching event, successful participants will be issued with a Memorandum of Agreement for completion. As part of this agreement, applicants will be expected to share the results of their project with the Spark Programme and other stakeholders. You must accept the conditions outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement to receive funding. You will be asked to accept the offer two weeks post initial offer.

An interim report will be required 6 months after drawdown of funds outlining milestones and achievements of the project to date. A final report will be due upon completion of the project.

Projects funded by the Spark Impact Fund will be invited to be part of the Spark Innovation Showcase at the Spark Summit and may be eligible for our Bright Spark National Innovation Awards.

FAQs

How often can I apply?

An individual or team can submit multiple applications as long as the ideas are different.

What are Design Thinking Workshops and do I have to attend?

At least one team member should have attended Design Thinking Introduction Part 1 (Understanding and defining the problem through user centered research) before the application closing date (please see 'Application Process' above). This is a 3.5 hour online session that provides an introduction and methodology to problem solving and innovation in healthcare. Applicants who have previously attended for another initiative are not required to attend again but you must state this in your application.

What types of projects does SPARK Impact support?

We are prioritising projects that have a high potential to positively impact the healthcare system through innovation and sustainability. In particular, we are prioritising several core themes (please see 'Types of SPARK Impact Projects' above).

Are digital health projects eligible for funding?

Yes, digital health projects are eligible for funding; however, eligibility is contingent upon alignment with the national digital strategy. Applications for digital health initiatives must clearly demonstrate how they contribute to and compliment the overarching goals and priorities of the [HSE Digital Roadmap](#) (click on link).

Can I apply for the Spark Impact Fund if I am not a clinician?

The Spark Impact fund is intended to support clinical innovators. However, SPARK also recognises that projects can emerge from any part of the health service and it is likely that successful projects will be the product of multidisciplinary teams that may include non-clinical members. The primary applicant must be a clinician but teams may be made up of clinical and non-clinical members.

At what stage of development should my project be at?

We welcome projects at all stages of development. However, the SPARK Impact Fund is particularly interested in projects that have undergone some initial problem discovery. We prioritise applications that have already demonstrated feasibility, potential impact and a solid foundation for further development.

What are stakeholders?

Stakeholders are those affected by the problem in some way. Patients are the number one stakeholder as the problem normally affects patients in the most direct manner. The clinical team are stakeholders as the problem affects how they treat patients or perform their daily duties.

Am I eligible to apply for the SPARK Impact Fund?

Anyone employed by the HSE or in the voluntary hospitals (Section 38) can apply. We are currently unable to accept applications from Section 39 organisations.

How do I apply for the SPARK Impact?

Applying for the innovation fund is easy. Simply complete the online application form and a member of the team will respond to you.

What is the funding amount available?

SPARK Impact offers three levels of funding tailored to the stage and needs of each project (please see 'Funding' above). Applicants are encouraged to carefully assess the stage of their projects and align their funding requests to the appropriate level. The selection process considers the alignment between funding levels and the expected Return on Investment for each project.

Will the funds be sent directly to me?

No, the funds will not be sent directly to you. The funds will be transferred to your organisation (or lead organisation in collaborative projects) from the HSE Spark Innovation Programme.

Can equipment be purchased with the SPARK Impact Fund?

Yes, equipment can be purchased that will facilitate your innovation project. However, all equipment purchased must be compliant with regulations under legislation and where required must have CE approval. Additionally, all purchasing must be completed in line with National Financial Regulations document B-1 Procurement.

If I previously availed of funding via another SPARK initiative, can I still apply for SPARK Impact?

Yes, applicants who have successfully been funded from other initiatives are eligible to apply, provided that the new application presents a redefined version (e.g. implementation phase) or a separate project from the one previously funded. Please ensure that you articulate how the new project differs or has evolved from previously funded projects.

What supports are available to me from the SPARK Innovation Programme?

The HSE Spark Innovation Programme has a well-established portfolio of supports available to clinicians engaging in innovation activity. Supports range from access to education, mentorship, advice, ideas workshopping, design input, boot-camps etc. Support packages for teams and individuals are curated on a bespoke basis relative to the needs and objects of the innovator/innovators in question. A full list of our supports are available on our website: www.hse/spark

Who can I contact to discuss my application prior to submission?

For additional information or clarification, please reach out to the SPARK Innovation Team at spark@hse.ie

Best of Luck!

The SPARK Innovation Team



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