

## **Invest Northern Ireland Horizon 2020 Voucher Guidance Notes**

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### **What is the Horizon 2020 Voucher Scheme?**

The Horizon 2020 Voucher Scheme is an Invest NI initiative aimed at supporting Northern Ireland based SMEs to explore the opportunities of Horizon 2020 European funding and apply for particular schemes or calls under it, with the assistance of a public sector Knowledge Provider (based in Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland).

### **Eligibility for Horizon 2020 Voucher Scheme**

All SMEs (including social enterprises) with main business operations in Northern Ireland are eligible to partner with a public sector Knowledge Provider under the Horizon 2020 voucher scheme. By SME we refer to organisations that employ between 1- 250 employees and have an annual turnover not exceeding €50 million.

Reference Source:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme\\_definition/sme\\_user\\_guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme_definition/sme_user_guide_en.pdf)

Businesses in the transport and primary agriculture sectors are excluded in line with State Aid guidelines.

Individual businesses may apply for a voucher. A group of businesses may also apply for a 'pooled' voucher ie multiple SMEs (up to ten) working collaboratively in developing the same Horizon 2020 application. Each business involved in a 'pooled ' application must meet the criteria.

### **What is Horizon 2020?**

Horizon 2020 is a new strategic €77 billion European funding programme supporting research and innovation and driving the creation of new growth and jobs in Europe.

<http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-eco-dev-index/deti-eco-dev-ni-horizon-2020.htm>.

An organisation of any type or size can compete to participate in Horizon 2020 and benefit from being part of pan-European consortia sharing knowledge, skills and experience.

If you participate in Horizon 2020, you could:

- achieve something that's too big to do alone
- collaborate across a value chain
- utilise your organisation's technology and/or know-how that is essential to a solution
- gain access to science and technology
- gain access to skills and expertise you don't have
- find opportunities to trial innovative solutions.

Activity of this nature is particularly important as economic success increasingly depends on the capacity to compete at a global level.

### **Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)**

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises are a key focus for Horizon 2020. At least 20% of the combined Horizon 2020 budget is dedicated to SME support. There is a new three-stage SME instrument available for single companies and collaborations, and a single set of rules with simplified and shorter procedures. Together with the Eurostars programme, this makes Horizon 2020 a good source of support for SMEs.

### **Can a company apply for more than one Horizon 2020 voucher?**

Businesses can apply for more than one Horizon 2020 voucher. However, only one application can be “live” and on-going at any point in time. A satisfactory final report must have been submitted from a previous Horizon 2020 voucher award and VAT paid prior to a new application for funds being submitted.

**The business must have identified and discussed the project with Invest NI and their chosen Knowledge Provider in advance of an application for a Horizon 2020 voucher.**

### **What is the value of the Horizon 2020 voucher?**

The award can be up to £4000 (€5000) for an individual programme of work towards an identified Horizon 2020 application to the European Commission.

‘Pooled’ projects may be awarded a voucher of up to £4000 per partner business to a maximum of ten vouchers.

It is anticipated that applications to the scheme will be submitted ideally around 6 months in advance of a Horizon 2020 European call closing date to ensure sufficient time to scope up the application and support the SME engagement during the period leading up to the call closing. The effectiveness of offering support for programmes of work over considerably shorter periods will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

### **What costs are eligible?**

The Horizon 2020 voucher is used to allow businesses to engage the services of a public sector Knowledge Provider based in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland. A full list of Knowledge Providers is available at [www.investni.com/innovation](http://www.investni.com/innovation).

Eligible costs include:

- Analysis of how similar companies have benefitted from participation in collaborative R&D programmes such as Framework Programme 7.
- Travel for the SME and Academic to attend European information days, brokerage events/training days directly related to the SME objectives, relevant discussions with European Commission officials or similar
- Support SME decision to proceed to next stage of proposal preparation by presentation of a range of possible roles for the SME within current Horizon 2020 work programmes. Consideration should be given to helping SME to understand; the rules of participation, implications in terms of budget, time scales to market, working collaboratively with transnational partners and Intellectual Property.
- Due diligence work to identify other collaborative partners e.g. other Knowledge Providers and companies
- Exploratory meetings for the SME and Knowledge Provider with partners in other European Countries to prepare the H2020 proposal
- Knowledge provider staff time to assist the drafting of SME inputs to Horizon 2020 proposal ensuring the evaluation criteria of S/T Quality, Impact and Implementation are addressed
- Knowledge provider Administrative time e.g. to arrange meetings, book flights, arrange accommodation etc.
- Travel and subsistence- this should be in line with the Knowledge provider's rules on travel and subsistence and booked/ paid for by the Knowledge Provider. Travel and accommodation may not normally exceed 30% of the voucher.

**Note: The Knowledge Provider and the business will agree a project terms of reference (using the Invest NI Letter of Notification template) in advance, same to be approved by Invest NI before work commences.**

The following activities, as for the standard Innovation Vouchers, are not eligible for support in the Horizon 2020 Scheme:

- achieving compliance with statutory regulations or legislation
  - standard training
  - software purchases/basic software development
  - aid that would promote/subsidise the cost of exports
  - internships for students of knowledge institutions
  - general marketing/promotional activities
  - standard i-phone apps
  - general business development activity, e.g. business plans, economic appraisals, etc.
  - website development and online optimisation
  - activities that might be supported by other Invest NI mainstream support mechanisms

The Horizon 2020 voucher scheme should not be used to support:

- Third-party consultancy costs (In exceptional circumstances, with a justification and the prior approval of Invest NI up to 20% of the costs may be subcontracted by the Knowledge provider to source specialist expertise)

- Academic-only applications: the awards are intended to assist SME engagement with Horizon 2020

### **Are the vouchers subject to VAT?**

Vouchers are subject to VAT and the business must pay the VAT element applicable to the Horizon 2020 voucher and any project costs in excess of the voucher value.

On completion of the project, the Knowledge Provider will invoice the business direct for the VAT payment

### **Interested?**

To find out more about Horizon 2020 and how to apply for a Horizon 2020 Voucher, please contact:

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