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Government of Ireland



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

EPA Research Programme 2014 – 2020

2018 Guide for Grantees
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The EPA Research Programme is a Government of Ireland initiative funded by the
Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

EPA Research Programme 2014-2020



This document provides general guidance for applicants, who have been awarded a research grant as part of the EPA Research Programme 2014-2020. For further information, please refer to the relevant Terms & Conditions document available on the EPA website (www.epa.ie).

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1. Payment of the Research Grant

Funding is provided on a discretionary basis by the EPA to the Grantee. The term 'Grantee' is defined in the Notification of Award of Research Grant and includes the Lead Organisation, the principal investigator and project participants there defined. It means each of them separately and all of them together or any number of them collectively.

Grant awards are subject to the conditions specified in the relevant Terms and Conditions document.

Lead organisations will be responsible for all aspects of management and implementation of the EPA Research Programme 2014-2020 funded project. All participants will be required to ensure that accurate accounts of expenditure are maintained. They should maintain appropriate documentation to support and justify the costs and time reported in their Cost Statements. This documentation must be complete (e.g. include reference material such as purchase order numbers, payment reference numbers, etc.) and accurate. Documentation should be held separately from other project records and be retained for a minimum of three years after completion of the Programme. It should also be noted that normal accounting rules and procedures require that all financial records and information should be retained for seven years after the financial period to which they relate.

Grant aid will be made in the form of reimbursement of eligible costs. Eligible costs shall be reimbursed where they are adequately justified by the participant. This reimbursement will be made on the basis of the submission of certified Cost Statements, together with supporting documentation, in respect of expenditure already incurred and paid for. The only exception to this is an initial advance payment of up to 50% of the grant funding. This will normally be payable within two months of the issue of the notification of grant award.

Reimbursements will normally be made twice a year (in spring and autumn) subject to the submission of satisfactory six-monthly financial and technical reports together with the required supporting documentation – please note, payment will not be released unless the financial and technical reports are deemed satisfactory and approved by the EPA or its appointed representative (see the relevant Terms and Conditions for details).

An amount equal to 15% of the total grant aid approved for the project will be retained in all cases pending satisfactory completion of the project (the retention payment). A project will be deemed to be satisfactorily completed following the certification of the final cost statement, the submission of a satisfactorily completed End of Project Questionnaire, publication of all journal articles as Open Access (for medium and large scale projects), the receipt of data and information resources generated by projects and sign-off of the final project report(s) by the EPA (or submission of the Thesis for scholarships). The Final Cost Statement for the project and the End of Project Questionnaire must be submitted within 28 days of the agreed project completion date. Grantees who do not comply with these requirements may be deemed ineligible to apply for future EPA Research Programme research grants.

Following the satisfactory completion of the project the EPA will issue a De-commitment letter outlining the certified expenditure, any financial adjustments made by its appointed financial agents and the potential de-commitment amount represented by the uncertified amount of the grant award (excluding post completion dissemination costs). Where the remaining available grant aid has not been claimed or where responses to any outstanding financial queries have not been fully resolved within 28 days of the date of this letter the EPA will de-commit the uncertified portion of the grant award for the project.

Funding agreed and ring fenced for the purpose of post completion dissemination will be reimbursed following the submission of a dissemination cost statement at the end of the 12-month period during which this funding may be utilised (i.e. within 12 months of satisfactory completion of the project). At this time the EPA will issue a further de-commitment letter.

All accounts and financial management systems will be subject to verification and audit by the EPA and/or their appointed representative. These financial management systems must also be open to inspection by the Funding Department(s) and/or the Department of Finance or their nominees for the purpose of their financial control and audit procedures.

Grantees will be required to present a valid tax clearance certificate prior to grant award in accordance with Department of Finance regulations. Details of how to obtain a tax clearance certificate can be found on the Revenue website at the following link:

<http://www.revenue.ie/en/online/etax-clearance-faqs.html>

Valid tax clearance certificates will be required before grant payments can be remitted. Grantees are also required to provide valid copies of Public and Employer's Liability insurance and Professional Indemnity insurance (where relevant) which must be updated annually. Evidence of compliance with relevant Health and Safety legislation may also be requested.

2. Project Management

Each project should have a single lead organisation with a nominated principal investigator who will co-ordinate the research and drive the overall objectives. The Principal Investigator has the following specific responsibilities:

- oversee the coordination of the various sub-projects to ensure that all deliverables are met,
- ensure effective dissemination/networking activities. The dissemination and communication of research findings to stakeholders including policy makers, the research community and the public is a key objective for these projects, therefore personnel, time and budget should be made available for these tasks over the life of the project and also for post completion dissemination activities,
- ensure compliance with technical and financial reporting requirements (see page 5),
- organise and ensure attendance of all relevant parties at all meetings required (see page 5) during the lifetime of the project,
- where a project steering committee has been established, ensure that any recommendations made by it are addressed,
- establish and maintain a project website / web page (for Medium-Scale, Large-Scale and Capability Development projects – see page 9),
- ensure that data from the sub-projects is provided to participants where required and uploaded to the [EPA Research Data Archive \(SAFER\)](#),
- organise and host communication / dissemination seminars throughout the project as appropriate,
- ensure that relevance to policy is included in technical and final reports,

- ensure compliance with financial reporting guidelines,
- provide photos, logos etc. as required for communication and dissemination purposes,
- act as a focus for information exchange between researchers and policy makers to ensure well founded scientific knowledge informs environmental policy.

In the case of capability development projects the EPA encourages the appointment of a full-time Project Manager to oversee the research work, integrate sub-projects and to ensure linkages with relevant policy-makers. It is expected that the project manager will work solely on the research project and will not have other responsibilities.

Principal Investigators and Project Managers should liaise regularly with the relevant EPA Research Programme officer, who is managing the project for the EPA.

3. Interim Reporting Requirements

Financial Reports (Cost Statements) and Technical Progress Reports should be submitted to the EPA during the lifetime of the project, via the EPA Grant Application & Project Management Portal (<https://epa.smartsimple.ie>), as per the schedule outlined in the table below.

Project Type	Technical Progress Report	Financial Cost Statement
Capability Development (CD)	28th January & 28th July	28th January & 28th July
Large-Scale (LS)	28th January & 28th July	28th January & 28th July
Medium-Scale (MS)	28th January & 28th July	28th January & 28th July
Desk-Study (DS)	28th January & 28th July	28th January & 28th July
Post-Doctoral Fellowship	28th January & 28th July	28th January & 28th July
Doctoral Scholarship	1st October	1st October

It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to ensure that reports are submitted on time and that they are of a satisfactory standard that clearly details financial and technical progress on the project. Any difficulties arising should also be reported together with the actions planned to overcome these difficulties.

4. Research Project Meetings

Project-based awards:

Progress meetings will be required for all project-based awards (DS, MS, LS, CD) including an initial project kick-off meeting and regular interim meetings as outlined below.

A kick-off meeting should be held within one month of the project start-up and should be attended by the EPA Research Programme officer, EPA technical officer, steering committee and the project team. The purpose is to formally initiate the project, to review the project plan (including any agreed revisions) and to discuss project management. The kick-off meeting is separate and additional to any project launch event held by the project team.

Where appropriate, the Grantee will ensure that members from all sub-projects meet regularly to discuss the various aspects and progress of their sub-projects and ensure integration and sharing of information as part of regular project team meetings. The Grantees should meet regularly with the

relevant EPA research Programme officer to discuss progress and highlight any potential issues. This may occur as part of a steering committee meeting (see page 7 for further details).

Researcher-based awards:

In the case of Doctoral and Masters Scholarships, progress meetings will be held at the discretion of the EPA and/or the Grantee to discuss any issues arising.

In the case of research fellowships, the Grantee should meet regularly (at least annually) with the relevant EPA Research Programme officer to discuss progress and highlight any potential issues.

5. Steering Committee

The EPA, in consultation with the Grantee and where applicable Co-Funding organisations, will establish a steering committee to provide advice to the research team and the EPA on the overall direction and approach of the project and to provide an external view of the research. The steering committee will also advise on the contents and structure of the final report.

The steering committee should comprise individuals with appropriate expertise and experience, including international/national experts and representatives from national organisations, relevant government departments, Local Authorities and Research bodies (such as Teagasc, Marine Institute etc.). The steering committee may also include one or more of the evaluators who reviewed the proposal during the evaluation process.

The principal investigator and project participants will be required to attend six-monthly steering committee meetings, and present results from their research. These meetings will be organized by the EPA and the principal investigator.

Recommendations provided by the Steering Committee must be considered and implemented where possible.

6. Deviation from original proposal

The Grantee should ensure that the project is not altered or adjusted without prior written consent from the EPA.

Project Time Extension (with no additional cost)

In the event of a project encountering delays, it is the responsibility of the Grantee to request a no cost time extension from the EPA as soon as it has become clear the project will not be completed within the agreed timeframe. The request should be made via SmartSimple.

Project extension (with supplementary funding)

Supplementary funding to further or more closely investigate results from the project may be granted in exceptional circumstances. The work may take place prior to or after the original project completion date. Requests for supplementary funding must be suggested at least 3 months prior to the completion date of the project to the project Steering Committee, who will make a recommendation to the EPA as to whether the Principal Investigator should be invited by the EPA to submit a written proposal for an additional cost extension. Proposals must be submitted using the appropriate application form (which will be made available as part of the invitation to submit a proposal). The work must be clearly additional to the work outlined in the original project proposal and must demonstrate significant added value to the project. Requests for supplementary work will only be considered in circumstances where the original reporting requirements for the project are completed in full to the satisfaction of the EPA. Supplementary funding will be strictly limited to a maximum value

equal to 50% of the original project budget, subject to the availability of funding. Salary Increments will not be considered eligible for funding during the extension period.

Maternity, Paternity and Adoptive Leave

The EPA will consider the provision of additional funding (in respect of the relevant statutory leave period) in circumstances over the course of the project where a member of the research team exclusively funded by the EPA Research Programme makes an application for maternity, adoptive or paternity leave. Each application will be considered on a case by case basis and is subject to additional funding being available to the EPA Research Programme. For further details please refer to the EPA Policy document on the Support of Maternity, Paternity and Adoptive Leave.

Budget Reallocation

When required, the Grantee can request a partial reallocation of funds across the different cost categories of the budget (e.g. Salary, Consumables, Equipment, Travel & Subsistence, External Assistance, etc...). The request should be made via SmartSimple. Normally, the total re-allocation between budget categories should not exceed 15% of the total project budget. The Grantee should ensure that any proposed reallocation is within the agreed budget. Reallocations between participants may be permitted in exceptional circumstances subject to the agreement of the EPA.

Travel outside the EU

Actual travel and related subsistence costs (including those based on approved mileage and subsistence rates) for personnel working on the project are fully reimbursable and may be charged to the project, provided that the costs comply with the participants normal practices in this regard and do not exceed Revenue Approved Civil Service Mileage and Subsistence rates. Where such costs are incurred they must be reasonable, separately identifiable, limited to the actual cost and should be a specific requirement for the implementation of the funded initiative. The prior approval of the EPA is required for travel to any destination outside the EU. Any such request should be made via SmartSimple.

Requests for time extensions, travel outside the EU and budget reallocations will be considered on a case by case basis.

7. Final Reporting Requirements

Submission of Final Reports

The EPA requires the principal investigator to submit a draft Final Report to describe the objectives, methodologies, outcomes, etc. of the research. If this report is longer than 75 pages, a draft Synthesis Report (20-30 pages), providing an overview of the work should also be submitted. It is important that all participants agree and sign-off on the content of the reports prior to submission to the EPA.

All reports should be submitted by the end date of the project, in accordance with the [Guidelines for Submission of Final Reports](#) available from the EPA website.

A short Abstract (max. 700 words) should also be provided. This will be used to describe the Final/Synthesis Report(s) once they become available on the EPA website.

For Doctoral and Masters scholarships, an electronic copy of the final thesis should be submitted to the EPA as well as an electronic copy of the abstract (max. 700 words).

A Final Report will not be considered to have been submitted to the EPA if it has not been submitted via Simple.

Review & Publication of the Final Reports

The Final report will be peer-reviewed and should be revised by the project team in order to address any comments/recommendations. In the event of a disagreement, justification should be provided to the EPA explaining why changes recommended were not carried out. The EPA will sign-off on the report(s), once satisfied with the contents.

If suitable for publication, the Synthesis Report or Final report will be sent for proofing, formatting and publishing by the EPA. All comments/queries from the proofreaders must be responded to by the report author(s) within 28 days. The authors are responsible for the proofing and formatting of the Final Report where this is not to be published by the EPA. All reports (where possible) will be made available on the EPA website once released. Where the Grantee has a web site, it should publish the final report on its web site once the EPA has approved the public release of the report.

Datasets

All significant datasets produced during the research project must be submitted to the EPA at the end of the project for archiving in the [EPA Research Data Archive \(SAFER\)](#). It will be the responsibility of the Grantee to ensure that all project participants provide their respective datasets as detailed on the [SAFER-Data Help Pages](#). The Grantee should also complete and submit to the EPA the Metadata Table (available on SmartSimple) for each dataset provided. Metadata Tables should be submitted via SmartSimple.

Descriptions of the datasets (using the metadata provided) will be made available publicly, while access to the datasets will be restricted to the data originators and EPA staff for a period up to 12 months after the publication date of the project report. Upon expiry of that period, datasets will be made publicly available.

Please note that the format of data and/or technical solutions (websites, developed software, database solutions etc.) must be agreed with the EPA to ensure that they can be installed on EPA infrastructure and maintained by EPA staff after the completion of the project. The EPA can supply a current list of approved data formats and technology on request and the exact format of all outputs must be agreed with the EPA before development of same commences. All data outputs must have a comprehensive set of metadata and all technical solutions must be fully documented according to EPA requirements

End of Project Questionnaire

On completion of a project all Grantees must complete and submit an End of Project Questionnaire via SmartSimple. The information provided will be used to demonstrate impact, value for money for environmental research and inform the future direction of the EPA Research Programme.

8. Communication, dissemination and publicity

The dissemination and communication of research findings to stakeholders including policy makers, the research community and the public is a key objective for projects funded under the EPA Research Programme.

Project participants are encouraged to submit papers relating to the project to peer-reviewed journals and to present findings at national and international conferences. Electronic copies of accepted papers, posters, etc. should be provided to the EPA.

Dissemination seminars should be held throughout the project as appropriate and at conclusion of the project.

Media releases should be provided to the EPA prior to issue. A draft of the media release must be sent to the EPA at least 28 working days before the planned release date. Please refer to the [EPA Guidelines for Project Communication Plans](#) for further details. The principal investigator is requested to be available to provide an overview/update on the project to the media – e.g. (newspapers, trade magazines, radio or television).

The principal investigator should establish and maintain a webpage/website specific to the project. This must be populated by an overview of the project, contact details of the project participants and principal investigator, as well as regular updates on the status of the project.

Please see [EPA Guidelines for Research Project Communication Plans](#) for further details.

The Grantee should refer to the support received from the EPA, any Co-Funding organisations, and the Irish Government, in any publicity or promotional activities relating to the project and respect copyright laws in any publication.

9. Termination

A grant may be terminated in whole or in part in circumstances detailed in the Terms and Conditions.

10. Intellectual Property

The EPA Research Programme funds not-for-profit research intended to generate knowledge for public good purposes and as such EPA expects that outputs and/or findings should be widely disseminated and made publicly available. The EPA's SAFER-data archive (<http://erc.epa.ie/safer>) should be used for this purpose.

Following satisfactory completion of a research project, Principal Investigators and Research Groups are granted a 12 month period of exclusive access to the datasets which they have collected to prepare material for publication in scientific journals.

Where there is a reasonable potential for commercial exploitation of research outputs, the EPA applies the principles of the document "[Inspiring Partnership – the national IP Protocol 2016](#)" to ensure that knowledge arising from its funded research is translated for public benefit.

11. Research Integrity

The EPA places great importance on ensuring that all aspects of the research which it funds is conducted to the highest standards of research integrity. The EPA fully endorses the [National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland](#) and the [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) and expects all funded research to abide by the guidelines included therein

12. Freedom of Information Act

The EPA may be obliged to disclose information relating to the project under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and / or the European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007 to 2014. Where the researcher submits any information to the EPA which it considers to be confidential, it must identify this information at the time it is submitted and explain why it considers the information to be confidential. The EPA will take account of the researcher's request, and will endeavour to give effect to it if it considers it to be reasonable; but it cannot guarantee that it will not be obliged to disclose any such information; and the researcher acknowledges this.

13. Data Protection Law

Personal information supplied to the EPA Research Programme will be stored in electronic and structured manual data formats e.g., hard copy folder or database, for use only in connection with this application and the administration of the EPA Research Programme and publication of results. The provisions of Data Protection Legislation shall be complied with by the EPA and the Grantees with respect to the processing of personal data.

Data Protection Legislation shall mean the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 and Directive 95/46/EC, any other applicable law or regulation relating to the processing of personal data and privacy (including the E-Privacy Directive and the European Communities (Electronic Communications Networks and Services) (Privacy and Electronic Communications) Regulations 2011, as such legislation shall be amended, revised or replaced from time to time, including by operation of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679) (**GDPR**) (and laws implementing or supplementing the GDPR and/or the E-Privacy Regulations).

The provisions of the applicable Terms and Conditions with respect to data protection, and the terms of the EPA Privacy Policy, shall apply to the processing of personal data in connection with the EPA Research Programme.

14. Further Information

Any enquiries relating to the above should be addressed to research@epa.ie