



European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)

Knowledge Gateway Scheme

2026 call for applications

Guidelines for Applicants



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag
an Aontas Eorpach

Co-Funded by the
European Union



Contents

Introduction.....	4
Eligible Beneficiaries - who can apply for this Scheme	4
Call Basis	4
Claim Deadline.....	4
Scheme Objectives.....	4
Amounts Grant Aided	5
Application and Approval Process	5
When will you hear from us	5
Things to note before starting your application	7
General guidance	7
Documentation checklist	7
Eligible and Ineligible Expenditure	7
Eligible Expenditure.....	7
Ineligible Expenditure.....	11
Eligibility Checks.....	12
Review & Evaluation	12
Appeals	18
Further Information/Clarifications	18

Introduction

These Guidelines for Applicants for the Knowledge Gateway Scheme provide guidance on the application process and assessment criteria.

Eligible Beneficiaries – who can apply for this Scheme

The only eligible beneficiaries are **state funded** Research Performing Organisations based in the Republic of Ireland, identified by the Research Map of Ireland.

Call Basis

This call for applications will be open from 22nd April until 5pm the 11th of June 2026. Late applications will not be accepted.

The call is competitive, meaning that all eligible applications will be scored and ranked and, in the case that the scheme is oversubscribed, funding will be allocated based on ranking. This ranking may be done per research topic. The Project Approval Board will determine the funding allocation across research topics.

Claim Deadline

Projects must complete by 31st August 2028. Successful applicants can submit an annual claim for costs incurred – one claim by 30th September 2027 for costs incurred up to 31st August 2027, and a second and final claim by 30th September 2028 for costs incurred up to the end of the project.

Scheme Objectives

The overall scheme objective is to foster sustainable aquaculture activities, and processing and marketing of fisheries and aquaculture products, thus contributing to food security in the Union.

The National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture 2030 (NSPSA) has 4 priority areas which may be progressed with support from this Scheme:

- Building resilience and competitiveness
- Participating in the green transition
- Ensuring social acceptance and consumer information
- Increasing knowledge and innovation

This call for applications is focused on specific research topics, as follows:

- Ecosystem services of low trophic aquaculture in Ireland
- Improving intake water quality in freshwater aquaculture facilities
- Mussel fouling, settlement dynamics and management strategies
- Zooplankton dynamics and associated risks to Atlantic salmon aquaculture in Irish coastal waters
- Assessing biodiversity in conjunction with oyster farming in Ireland

Further information on each topic can be found [here](#).

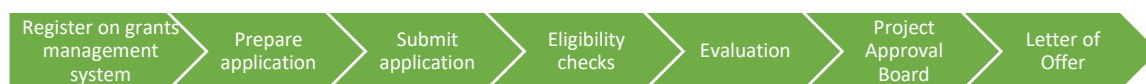
Amounts Grant Aided

Beneficiary Type	Aid Intensity Rate	Expenditure Type
All	100%	All

The grant aid cap per application is €250,000.

Application and Approval Process

This flow shows the steps involved in getting from application preparation to receiving a Letter of Offer.



- All applications are submitted through BIM's grants management system. If the applicant is not already registered on the system, they will need to do so.
- The applicant prepares and submits their application in BIM's grants management system.
- BIM carries out a series of eligibility checks to ensure that all required information has been provided and shows compliance with scheme rules.
- A series of evaluation reviews are then carried out, and a BIM panel meets to score the application.
- All eligible applications which meet the minimum score required (60/100) are presented to a Project Approvals Board. Applications are appraised having regard to the objectives of the scheme, the specific research topics for this call, and the quality of the proposal.
- If the Project Approvals Board approves the application for funding, a Letter of Offer will be issued.

When will you hear from us



1. When you submit your application, you will receive an automated email acknowledging receipt. If you do not receive this email, it is because the application has not been successfully submitted. Please check your spam folder in case the acknowledgement of receipt has been directed there. *Please note that an acknowledgement of receipt email is not a confirmation of grant aid. At this point the application is being processed only.* Your application will be assigned a unique reference number, and you will be notified of this in the acknowledgement email. The unique reference number should be used in any subsequent correspondence or enquiry with BIM.
2. All applicants will hear from us at the end of this stage, but some applicants may have their form returned if it is incorrect/incomplete.
 - You will hear from us if there is an issue with your application. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure a full and complete application is submitted. If, during eligibility checking, it is discovered that information is missing, or is incorrect, your application may, if time allows, be returned to you describing the issue(s). You will be given a deadline by which all corrections must be made and the grant application resubmitted. If it is still incorrect or incomplete on resubmission it may be deemed ineligible.
 - If our checks show that the application is not eligible for the scheme, or if we could not validate your eligibility based on the information provided, your application will be rejected, and the reason provided.
3. Following evaluation BIM will inform you of the decision of the Project Approval Board by issuing a Letter of Offer or a Letter of Rejection.

The more complete your application is when first submitted, the more likely it is to proceed smoothly through all stages with minimum delays. We encourage all applicants to take the time to fully understand the application form, and the evaluation criteria, so that they submit a quality application.

Things to note before starting your application

General guidance

- Applicants are advised to check that their application includes all the relevant information, as it will be evaluated based on the submitted content.
- The primary communication method used in the administration of this scheme is email. It is the responsibility of the Applicant to ensure that BIM is on their safe list of contacts, and that they regularly check their email for any updates or deadline requirements.
- All applications must be made in euro.

Documentation checklist

You will need the following documentation to complete this form:

- CV's for actively participating project team members, or job descriptions where the person filling the role is not yet known
- Project plan (in your own format)
- Project risk register (in your own format)
- Project budget (an Excel template is supplied in the application form, and this is the only format accepted)

Eligible and Ineligible Expenditure

Eligible Expenditure

Eligible costs are defined as direct or indirect costs incurred in carrying out the research project. They must fulfil the following criteria:

- They must be **actual**;
- They must be **reasonable** and **wholly necessary** for the project;
- They must be incurred **during the lifetime** of the project;
- They must be **recorded** in the accounts for the project, which must be maintained during the lifetime of the project and reported on as required by BIM;
- They must **not be funded from any other source**; and
- They must be **incurred solely to advance the research project**.

The eligible **cost categories** are:

1. The relevant portion of salary costs of non-core personnel directly employed on the project will be eligible for support – total salary cost for productive hours 1,720 hours per annum (with timesheets maintained). Salary costs of permanent/core staff will not be eligible.
2. Costs borne by industry directly related to their contribution to the project.
3. Subcontractor costs (not allowed between consortium partners).
4. Consumables.
5. Publication costs, and promotion of research results to the Irish seafood sector.

6. Travel and subsistence costs.
7. Equipment (depreciation only for project period for equipment subject to depreciation).
8. Vessel charter.
9. Other direct costs (e.g., software licences, sampling/analysis) essential to the implementation of the project.
10. Overheads will be eligible at a flat rate of 25% of eligible direct costs.
11. Value Added Tax is eligible since this is not recoverable by the eligible beneficiaries.

Grantees may apply to BIM to transfer between cost headings during the grant term. All budget reallocations will be subject to approval. Further details are available below.

Further notes on what is eligible under each cost category are provided below, along with information on what will be sought for each category at the time of claim.

1) Staff Costs

Staff costs are deemed to be:

- the gross salary of eligible staff members;
- the grantee's contribution to their PRSI (pay related social insurance) costs; and
- the grantee's contribution to their pension. This rate must be specified in the budget and is subject to a maximum of 20% of salary.

Please further note:

- Only the costs of the actual hours/days worked by the persons directly carrying out work under the project may be charged. Such personnel must:
 - Be directly hired by the participant;
 - Work under the sole technical supervision and responsibility of the participant, and
 - Be remunerated in accordance with the normal practices of the participant.
- Remuneration costs must be calculated individually for each staff member and the use of average salary or pay scale levels is not permitted.

At the time of claim, the following will be sought:

- For staff who are employed full-time on the project:
 - Payroll records of the participant showing costs for remuneration of salary reflecting the total gross remuneration plus the employer's portion of PRSI and pension contributions.
 - A declaration confirming the staff were employed full time on the project, signed by both the staff member and a Finance Officer.
- For staff who are employed part-time on the project:
 - Payroll records of the participant showing costs for remuneration of salary reflecting the total gross remuneration plus the employer's portion of PRSI and pension contributions.
 - Timesheets.
 - Hourly rate.
 - Standard hours per week.
- Relevant documentation regarding the employer's pension contributions to validate that these contributions are made to an appropriate pension scheme.

2) Costs borne by industry

Note that one of the evaluation criteria for applications is outreach and engagement, so it is expected that appropriate costs are budgeted to integrate potential users of the project results into project planning and into the work of the project.

At the time of claim, the following will be sought:

- A record of costs incurred by industry members (maintained by the grantee), showing:
 - Industry member name
 - Date of the cost
 - Nature of the cost
 - Value of the cost
- Proof of payment of these costs to industry members

3) Subcontractor costs

Where specialist resources are required, it may be necessary to obtain external assistance in the form of subcontract or consultancy arrangements. These costs may only be charged as external assistance to the project if:

- they are incurred in compliance with the conditions set out in the Letter of Offer;
- they do not exceed 20% of the overall grant-aid allocated to the project;
- the subcontracts for external assistance are awarded and concluded in accordance with the Irish government procurement procedures as set out in the Department of Finance public procurement regulations (BIM's Grants Management System provides additional information on requirements for supplier quotes - the number of quotes required, and the content of those quotes);
- they are in accordance with market prices; and
- a clear explanation is given as to why the project team could not have included these specialist skills.

As subcontracting and consultancy arrangements invariably relate to the production of a service, it should be clear in all consulting or subcontracting arrangements that any intellectual property arising from such work remains the property of the participant and must be at the entire disposal of the participant.

At the time of claim, the following will be sought:

- Copies of quotes or tender responses received - noting that the grant aid offered will be that matching the lowest quote, regardless of the supplier selected.
- Invoices from subcontractors.
- Proof of payment to subcontractors.

4) Consumables

Examples of eligible consumables would be laboratory consumables, or books and specialist journals.

At the time of claim, the following will be sought:

- Invoices for consumable costs incurred
- Proof of payment

5) Publications costs, and promotion of research results to the Irish seafood sector

Costs should be included to cover the preparation and publication of research outputs, e.g. reports, brochures, books and other publications. All publications must acknowledge the funding provided by BIM. Note that one of the evaluation criteria for applications is outreach

and engagement, so it is expected that appropriate costs are budgeted to promote research outputs.

At the time of claim, the following will be sought:

- Invoices for any external costs incurred related to publication and promotion
- Proof of payment of invoices
- Where costs are internal, accounting records showing the cost allocation to the project
- Copies of publications and confirmation of the publication method (digital/print)

6) Travel and Subsistence

Actual travel and related subsistence costs (including those based on 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 Irish civil service rates.

Where travel costs are incurred by employees involved in the project and such costs are reimbursed by the participant on the basis of a lump sum or per diem basis then it is the lump sum or per diem payment that is considered to be the eligible cost.

Where researchers outside of the State are required by the project co-ordinator to attend project meetings in Ireland, their costs will be deemed eligible and will not require prior approval. The approval of such travel will be contingent upon adequate budget being available, based on the applicant's original submission, and appropriate justification being provided by the relevant participant. Failure to do so will result in all costs relating to travel from outside of the country being disallowed.

At the time of claim, the following will be sought:

- Detailed travel and subsistence records being charged to the project, showing:
 - The name of the project team member;
 - The date(s) of travel;
 - The purpose of travel;
 - The nature of the costs e.g. mileage, accommodation, per diem; and
 - The cost.
 - In addition, where individuals are reimbursed for use of their private vehicle for business travel by way of mileage then the relevant rate per mile, destination, and number of miles travelled must be clearly stated.

7) Equipment

If the equipment required for the project is written off over more than 2 years (24 months), only the depreciation over the lifetime of the project is eligible.

If the equipment required for the project is written off within 2 years, the full cost is eligible.

At the time of claim, the following will be sought:

- Where depreciation is eligible, an extract of a Fixed Asset Register will be sought, which clearly shows depreciation of the eligible equipment for the timeframe the claim covers. This will need to be signed by a qualified accountant.
- Where the full cost is eligible, an invoice and proof of payment will be sought.

8) Vessel Charter

Should vessel charter have been included and approved in the application budget, the following will be sought at the time of claim:

- An invoice for the vessel charter, showing the vessel name, the cost per day and the number of days
- Proof of payment

9) Other Direct Costs

Other direct costs can include specific items as stated in the application budget or in an approved budget reallocation, which do not come into any of the above eligible cost categories. Such costs may only be claimed subject to prior approval by BIM. Examples would be software licences, sampling or analysis costs.

At the time of claim, the following will be sought:

- Invoices for budgeted costs
- Proof of payment

10) Overheads

Overheads will be eligible at a flat rate of 25% of eligible direct costs (excluding equipment, sub-contracting costs, and vessel charter). Costs deemed to be covered by overheads include stationery, interview expenses, advertising costs, etc

At the time of claim, the evidence provided for the eligible direct costs, and accepted by BIM as sufficient to support payment of direct costs, will also be considered sufficient to support payment of overheads. BIM will determine if any costs included in other categories should be deemed to be covered by overheads.

Ineligible Expenditure

The following operations or expenditure are not eligible for support:

- Indirect taxes / charges.
- Foreign exchange losses
- Debt and debt service charges.
- Costs funded by another National or EU grant.
- Resources received free of charge.
- Cost of recruitment.
- Salary costs, except as provided for under eligible expenditure above.
- Overheads, except as provided for under eligible expenditure above.
- Purchase of land or buildings.
- The cost of existing product, stock or raw material used as part of the project.
- Costs relating to training.

Eligibility Checks

- The application is from an eligible organisation.
- The application form is complete in all areas, including all required uploads.
- The application contains adequate information to allow the proposal to be properly evaluated.

Review & Evaluation

All eligible applications will be reviewed by a panel of technical evaluators. An evaluation panel will then meet to score applications using the following guidance.

Evaluation Guidance

Criterion	What the evaluation panel will consider	If....	...then score in the range:
Alignment with scheme objectives	<p>The degree to which the proposed activity aligns with the priority areas of the scheme call, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there adequacy between the proposal’s objectives and research questions and the priorities of the present call? <p>The degree to which the proposed activity contributes to the delivery of actions under the NSPSA 2030 and EMFAF Programme, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there adequacy between the proposal’s objectives and research questions and the priorities of the NSPSA? • The degree to which it aligns to EU Taxonomy and social safeguards. 	<p>The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion, and any shortcomings are minor.</p>	<p>35-50</p>
	<p>The degree to which the proposed activity addresses the needs of the aquaculture sector, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The degree to which it aligns to the detailed topic area outlined in the scheme call; • The credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the call text, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project; • The clarity of the plan for impact and if this follows logically from the expected results of the project; and • The level of ambition in the proposal with regard to solving the problem to be addressed. 	<p>The proposal addresses the criterion well, but several shortcomings are present.</p>	<p>20-34</p>
		<p>The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.</p>	<p>0-19</p>

Criterion	What the evaluation panel will consider	If....	...then score in the range:
Organisational governance and capacity	<p>There is the right balance of skills and expertise to cover the proposed work, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the proposed organisation and management of the scientific project is effective and efficient? • If the technical/human resources assigned to the work packages is in line with their objectives and deliverables? <p>The appropriate leadership and management skills are proposed to deliver the work, with a clear approach to develop others, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the proposal brings together the necessary expertise; • The extent to which participants in the proposal are well suited to the tasks assigned to them; • The extent to which roles are well defined and complement each other; and • The extent to which tasks are well balanced among participants. <p>Effective and appropriate project management and time scales are proposed to achieve project objectives, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality and effectiveness of the work plan, the appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall. <p>The project is feasible, and comprehensively identifies any risks to delivery and how they will be managed, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The comprehensiveness of the risk management plan; and • The feasibility of achieving the outcomes defined within the project timeline and with the proposed resources. 	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion, and any shortcomings are minor.	8-10
		The proposal addresses the criterion well, but several shortcomings are present.	4-7
		The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.	0-3

Criterion	What the evaluation panel will consider	If....	...then score in the range:
Research impact, technical and scientific merit	<p>The proposal describes a clear and transparent methodology, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-disciplinary approaches, appropriate consideration of the ethical issues according to the EU "Do no significant harm" principle (DNSH) and gender dimension in research and innovation content. 	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion, and any shortcomings are minor.	14-20
	<p>The degree to which the activity will advance current understanding, generates new knowledge, and has the potential to advance thinking or discovery within the aquaculture sector, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the proposed work is ambitious, and goes beyond the state of the art? • The extent to which the proposed activity suggests and explores creative, original concepts? • Does the proposal take scientific and/or technological risks? • Does the proposal have a potential breakthrough despite this risk-taking? 	The proposal addresses the criterion well, but several shortcomings are present.	8-13

Criterion	What the evaluation panel will consider	If....	...then score in the range:
	<p>The degree to which the activity will maximise translation of outputs into outcomes and impacts relevant to aquaculture in Ireland, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the proposal identify the right actors to make successful use of the results possible? <p>The degree to which the activity improves in Technology Readiness Level of a product or method relevant to the aquaculture sector, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the proposal improves the TRL of a product or method relevant to the aquaculture sector to at least a TRL 7 (System prototype demonstration in operational environment). 	<p>The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.</p>	0-7
Value for money	<p>The degree to which the applicant has demonstrated that the anticipated resources for their proposed work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are comprehensive, appropriate, and justified; represent the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes; and maximise potential outcomes and impacts. 	<p>The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion, and any shortcomings are minor.</p>	8-10
		<p>The proposal addresses the criterion well, but several shortcomings are present.</p>	4-7
		<p>The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.</p>	0-3
Outreach and engagement	<p>The degree to which users or potential users of the results of the project have been integrated into the planning of the project, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project plan include clear activities with the industry mentor and an effort to liaise with different stakeholders? 	<p>The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion, and any shortcomings are minor.</p>	8-10

Criterion	What the evaluation panel will consider	If....	...then score in the range:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the project plan foresee a clear impact on society and industry? <p>The degree to which stakeholders will be integrated into the work of the project, considering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of open science practices, including sharing and management of research outputs and engagement of citizens, civil society and end users where appropriate. <p>How progress and results will be disseminated to the stakeholders, considering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there feasible exploitation and dissemination plans of the scientific project results (including management of Intellectual Property Rights) • Are the expected results or the knowledge acquired of importance for economic development? • Is there a clear communication plan? 	<p>The proposal addresses the criterion well, but several shortcomings are present.</p>	<p>4-7</p>
		<p>The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.</p>	<p>0-3</p>

All applications which achieve a score of at least 60 will go forward to a Project Approval Board. The Project Approval Board will determine the funding allocation based on the score achieved, but also providing balance across research topics.

Appeals

As Per BIM's standard policy and procedures

Further Information/Clarifications

Requests for further information/clarifications should be addressed, by email, to the contact details below. Where appropriate, responses to requests for further information/clarifications will be made available to all interested parties via grantshelpdesk@bim.ie