

The logo for Spark Impact 2025. 'Spark' is written in a multi-colored font (red, orange, yellow, green, blue) and 'Impact' is in black. A small icon of three stylized figures in blue, green, and red is positioned above the 'k' in 'Spark'. '2025' is written in red below 'Impact'.

Spark Impact 2025

A Frontline Innovation Initiative





NATIONAL
DOCTORS
TRAINING
& PLANNING



Health &
Social Care
Professions



Oifig an Stiúirthóra Seirbhísí
Altranais & Cnáimhseachais

Office of the Nursing and
Midwifery Services Director

Sections

Introduction	1
Types of Applications Sought	1
Categories of Spark Impact Projects	2
Background	3
Features of Applications Sought	4
Is My Project Eligible	5
Application Process	6
Eligibility	9
Funding	9
Marking Scheme	10
Successful Applicants	10
FAQs	11
Social Contacts	14

Introduction

The Spark Innovation Programme is launching Spark Impact 2025, 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 HSE frontline healthcare professionals (e.g. 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.

- AI and Automation
- Cancer Services
- Children's Health
- Climate Change & Sustainability
- Disability Services
- Human Rights, Equality and Social Inclusion
- Mental Health
- Older Person's Services
- Preventative Health and Wellbeing
- Primary Care/Community Care
- Productivity & Efficiency
- Sepsis
- Urgent and Emergency Care/Patient Flow
- Waiting List Initiatives /Scheduled Care
- Women's Health
- Other

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. This might include engaging 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 5pm on 14th February 2025. 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.

Spark Impact 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 HSE frontline healthcare workers from across all disciplines, public hospitals, community settings and Regional Health Areas across Ireland

Applications should aim to highlight the following features, where applicable:

Desirability

Identification of a clear unmet need

- Clearly defined scope
- Clearly identified target population
- Gaps and Limitations of current systems outlined

Impact on the health service

- Improved patient outcomes
- Improved patient experience
- Improved staff experience
- Reduction in Cost
- Improved Health Equity

Innovation and novelty

- Novel project to the setting
- New technology/service or process
- Demonstrates a 'step-change' in current practice

Feasibility

Team and Collaboration

- Cross-disciplinary collaboration (if required)
- Team with relevant skills
- Allocation of time

Stakeholder Engagement

- Support from relevant clinical site management/leads
- Health Service Users involved in its development
- Engagement with other staff and patients

Integration into existing Infrastructure/Regulatory Requirements

- Have technologies necessary regulatory approval (CE marked or other)?
- Do digital technologies integrate into the current digital strategy?
- Necessary infrastructure to facilitate the implementation of a new service or process?

Viability

Potential for Scalability

- Potential for use in other areas
- Potential for scale and transfer
- Clear steps to deliver pilot

Sustainability

- Identification of funding streams
- Risks/Barriers identified
- Plan for sustaining project

Reasonable Budget and Return on Investment (ROI)

- Clearly outlined budget
- Each budget item clearly justified
- Value for money/ultimate cost-savings

Is My Project Eligible for Spark Impact?

Projects that fall under the following categories will **NOT** be eligible for Spark Impact Funding:

- Development of new apps
- Development of Electronic Health Records or similar
- Research without clear translational component
- Research publication fees
- Medical technology that is not CE marked
- Projects intended for commercialisation

We advise you to read the above list carefully. Due to the high volume of applications we receive, we will not be providing applicants with individualised feedback to any submissions that fall.

Application Process

1	Online Application Submission Opens: Monday 13th January 2025
2	Design Thinking Workshop Register for dates: 15th Jan or 5th Feb (click to apply)
3	Information Webinar 23rd January at 1pm Register here (Webinar Registration)
4	Deadline for Applications 5pm on 14th February 2025
5	Short-list of High Potential Projects Announced 28th February 2025
6	Pitch Event: Week of 17th March 2025 Teams go through a final pitch event and selection with a panel of innovation experts
7	Successful Projects Notified Week ending 28th of March
8	Transfer of funds: Funding subject to completion of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

1. Design Thinking Workshop

Prior to submission, at least one team member should attend 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, or other Human Centred Design modules via other Spark initiatives or external providers 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 13th January 2025 and will close on 14th February 2025.

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. Pitch

The short-listed applicants will have the opportunity to pitch to a panel of experts in healthcare innovation. Decisions regarding projects to be funded will take place after pitching has taken place.

5. 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 (see pg5). 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:

Description	Marks Available
Identification of a clear unmet need	20
Impact on the health service	20
Innovation and Novelty	20
Team and Collaboration	10
Potential for Scalability and Transferability	10
Return on Investment (ROI)	20

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 a Design Thinking Workshop. 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 complement 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 [Spark Impact Application Form 2025](#) 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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