



Mauritius Research and Innovation Council

Call for Applications
Fast Track Innovation Initiatives

Guidelines to Applicants

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1. Background

As a result of the COVID19 pandemic, many countries including the Republic of Mauritius are confronted with a slow/fragile economic recovery while contending with issues such as food security, sustainability and adoption of technologies.

In order to improve and accelerate the response to the economic and social challenges brought about by the current crisis and improve the country's resilience to unforeseen situations, the Council is launching a Call for Applications for Fast-Track innovation initiatives aimed at supporting innovative projects in thematic areas.

2. Aim and Objectives

The Call for Applications for Fast-Track innovation initiatives is aimed at supporting short term innovative projects in thematic areas. The ultimate objective of any proposed project should be the development or improvement of products, processes or techniques that will benefit the economy or provide potential solutions to social challenges.

3. Thematic Areas

Thematic areas that will be considered for funding are as follows:

Emerging Sectors	Indicative Areas include Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Blockchain, Fintech, Robotics
Smart Agriculture	Indicative Areas: Field Management, Automated Crop Management, Precision Agriculture, Bio-fertilisers, Nutraceuticals
Circular Economy	Indicative Areas include: Alternative to Plastics, Sustainable Materials, Upcycling, Recycling, Reuse
Inclusive Innovation	Social Entrepreneurship, Poverty Alleviation, Women Empowerment, Mainstreaming of vulnerable groups

Projects that can be funded under this Call are encouraged to leverage on existing infrastructure, capabilities, and networks with local/international partners.

4. Deadline

- The **Application Deadline** is **Wednesday 17th March 2021**. Applications received after the due date will not be considered.
- The online application form is available at <http://www.specialcall.mu>. Any queries should be sent to the MRIC by email on fii@mrhc.mu. Applications will be evaluated in the order they are received.

5. Eligibility

5.1 The main applicant must be one of the following:

- i. a Company or Business (including MSMEs, large enterprises) registered with the Registrar of Companies in the Republic of Mauritius for at least one year
- ii. an Organisation/Association including Non-Governmental Organisations registered with the Registrar of Associations in the Republic of Mauritius for at least one year
- iii. a Cooperatives registered with the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives (Cooperatives Division) for at least one year.
- iv. an Institution registered with the Higher Education Commission for at least one year or
- v. a Public/Private Research Institution in the Republic of Mauritius in existence for at least one year.

The main applicant is encouraged to collaborate with local or international institutions/companies/organisations.

5.2 The Project Leader must be employed by the institution/company/organisation submitting the application. The individual who is proposed as the Project Leader at the time of the submission of the application is expected to be the Project Leader for implementation of the project.

The Project Leader must be a Mauritian national/resident or holder of a Mauritian work permit covering at least the period of time during which the proposed project will be undertaken.

6. Funding opportunity

The total amount available for this Call for Applications is currently MUR 40 Million.

The maximum amount per grant is MUR 1 Million over a period of maximum 9 months.

While this is a 100% grant to be awarded for approved projects, applicants are advised to demonstrate their contribution to the project. The applicant's contribution can be in-cash and/or in-kind.

Applications submitted under the Smart Agriculture, Circular Economy and Inclusive Innovation themes should respect the following ceiling for their requested amount: up to 40% of the requested amount for HR Costs and up to 40% of the requested amount for Equipment Costs. Applicants are strongly advised to consult the Guide on Allowable and Non-Allowable Expenses specific to this Call (www.specialcall.mu).

7. Assessment of applications

The assessment of applications will be undertaken in a two-stage process (i) Administrative Screening and (ii) Technical Evaluation.

Administrative Screening

The MRIC will perform a pre-screening of applications according to the eligibility criteria as outlined in the Call. This will also include

1. A due diligence on the institutions/companies/organisations involved in the project as well as on the team members.
2. A verification of the originality of the proposal through a similarity index.
3. Where the applicant or its collaborators has benefitted previous grants from the Council, the track record of the applicant/collaborator will be verified.

All mandatory fields in the Application Form should be completed. **Incomplete application forms will not be assessed.** The onus is on the applicant to ensure that the application form, CVs, letter of support and any other required supporting documents are submitted within the stipulated deadline. Where specific clearances or authorisation is required from relevant authorities, the applicant must initiate the appropriate process to obtain the relevant clearance/authorisation and in the event the application is successful, the contractual agreement will only be signed upon receipt of the relevant clearances/authorisations.

Technical Evaluation

An Independent Panel will conduct the Technical Evaluation in an expedited manner and in accordance with MRIC review principles.

The Technical Evaluation will be based on the following criteria:

- Quality of the proposed project
 - The scope of the proposal, including the appropriateness and innovativeness of the project.
 - Extent to which the application responds to the aim and objectives of this call for applications.
 - Appropriateness of the budget and justification for amount requested.
- Expertise of applicant and team members
 - Qualifications and track records of the applicant and team members.
 - Ability of the team to mobilise necessary resources.
 - How the in-house research/business environment at the applicant's organisation supports the planned work.
- Expected deliverables and impact of the project
 - The potential for timely and significant contributions in dealing with the identified challenges
 - Expected impact on the company or on society
 - The plans for sharing, dissemination or monetisation (where applicable) of project outcomes.

Applicants may be invited for a presentation, during which they would be required to answer questions based on their application to the Independent Panel.

8. Decision

- Funding decisions will be reached within an estimated 10 weeks after the closure of the deadline.
- The MRIC will endeavour to communicate its funding decisions as swiftly as possible so that approved projects can start immediately upon award.
- Only successful applicants will be notified.
- The decision of the Council will be final.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

Upon signing of the contractual agreement with successful applicants, funds will be disbursed on a mutually agreed milestone. Thereafter, the applicants would be required to submit progress reports and financial reports in timely manner on the templates provided by the MRIC.

The contractual agreement to be signed between the successful applicant and the MRIC is available on the website (www.specialcall.mu). By submitting an application under the Call for Applications, the applicant undertakes to abide by the terms and conditions outlined in the contractual agreement in the event their application is successful.

10. Publication and accessibility of Research and Innovation results

Upon completion of the project, grantees will be asked to present their project outcomes in a final report.

The successful applicants may also be called upon to present the project (while respecting ethical, confidentiality and commercial sensitivity constraints) in any dissemination event organised by the Council. Moreover, the abstract (*as specified in Section B.1 of the application form*) will be made public and will be published on the MRIC website (<http://www.mric.mu>) / Mauritius Research Repository (<https://www.repository.mu>) in the event the application is approved.

11. Queries and clarifications related to submission of applications

For all queries and clarifications regarding this Call for Applications, please contact the MRIC on the following email: fii@mric.mu or through our social media pages. Any queries or clarifications should be submitted to the MRIC before *Monday 15th March 2021 at 12:00 hrs.*

12. Privacy, Proprietary Information and Data Protection

Information contained in the applications will remain the property of the applicant, however MRIC will retain file copies of all applications for record purposes.

Applicants are advised to limit any proprietary information to the extent they deem essential for proper evaluation of their application. Proprietary information may be included in the body of the application or set apart from other text. Any proprietary information included in the application must be clearly marked by sentence or paragraph, as 'proprietary & confidential'. Applicants are advised to ensure that the proprietary information disclosed (if any) is restricted to information having: (i) minimal risk to jeopardising the award of patents or (ii) no risk for revealing trade secrets or commercial or other financial information that could adversely affect the competitive position of the applicants.

Proprietary information submitted to MRIC will be treated as confidential, to the extent permitted by law, if it is clearly identified. Without assuming any liability for inadvertent disclosure, MRIC will limit dissemination of properly marked information to its employees, the independent panel and, if necessary, to external reviewers for the evaluation of the proposal on a confidential basis.

In compliance with the Data Protection Act 2017 of the Republic of Mauritius, all personal information submitted along with the application shall be solely used for (i) processing and evaluation of the application and (ii) monitoring and evaluation of any approved project.