



FUNDING SCHEME

«RESTART 2016-2020» Programmes for Research, Technological Development and Innovation

PROGRAMME

«STRENGTHENING INNOVATION SUPPORT STRUCTURES»

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

SUPSTRUCTURES/0125





INTRODUCTION

The Research and Innovation Foundation (RIF) announces the Call for Proposals for the «**Strengthening Innovation Support Structures**» Programme within the framework of the «**RESTART 2016-2020**» Programmes for Research, Technological Development and Innovation – Programmes for the Period 05/2022 – 06/2025 and invites potential beneficiaries to submit relevant Project Proposals (Proposals).

The present Call will be financed by the Recovery and Resilience Facility of the NextGenerationEU instrument, in the frame of the action C3.212 «Innovation Funding Programmes and Funding Schemes for the Enhancement of Growth and Competitiveness of startups, innovative companies and SMEs» of the Cyprus Recovery and Resilience Plan. The Action is implemented under Policy Axis 3: «Strengthening the Resilience and Competitiveness of the Economy», and specifically the Component 3.2 «Enhanced Research and Innovation».

GENERAL CALL INFORMATION

Pillar	III. Transformation of RTDI System
Programme	Strengthening Innovation Support Structures
Call Identifier	SUPSTRUCTURES/0125
Funding Source	EU Recovery and Resilience Facility
Call Budget	300.000 Euro
Maximun Funding Per Project	Up to 10.000 Euro per enterprise supported Up to 100.000 per Support Structure
Publication Date	16 January 2025
Deadline	10 March 2025, 13:00

The English version of the Call, even though an official translation endorsed by the Research and Innovation Foundation, is provided for information purposes only. Only the Greek version of the Call is legally binding and shall prevail in case of any divergence in interpretation.

OBJECTIVES

«Strengthening Innovation Support Structures» Programme aims to strengthen local innovation support structures in order to offer high-quality services and meet the needs of startups, enhancing their business and commercial activities, and subsequently their chances of success.



DESCRIPTION

«Strengthening Innovation Support Structures» Programme, seeks to support local Innovation Support Structures to implement structured cycles of supporting programs addressed to startups. Startups are considered companies with a technological orientation and potential for high growth, which are established with the aim of developing a product/service that the founders of the company seek to make available to the market.

Through the Program, the RIF provides financial support with the aim of enhancing the quality of services and related activities provided by the support structures, so that the participating startups increase their chances of success. More specifically, it aims to «direct» more mature startups, which have prospects for shorter market penetration, to local Innovation Support Structures, from which they will receive added value services that will enhance their chances of market penetration and income generation from sales and/or from the acquisition of private investments.

The Innovation Support Structures are expected to make use of the RIF funding to cover their staff costs for the implementation of the structured programs cycles, as well as other related costs related to, indicatively, the fees of specialized consultants/trainers, staff training, organization of events, etc.

BENEFICIARIES

Research Organisations, Enterprises, Other Organisations

Entities that have secured funding under the SUPSTRUCTURES/0524 Call are not eligible to participate.

SPECIFIC RESTRICTIONS AND CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION

Host Organisation (HO) of a project can be any organisation (legal entity), regardless of its status, which is legally established and active in the Republic of Cyprus, which will implement, in the frame of the RIF's Programme, a up to 12 months structured startups support program cycle, which will include at least an impartial startup selection process and the provision of added value services to startups.

Support structures from abroad may implement program cycles in Cyprus provided that they cooperate with a supporting structure active in Cyprus, or they have registered a legal entity in the Republic of Cyprus.

For each program cycle that a selected structure will implement, it will be able to receive funding for a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 10 startups, which will be selected through its selection process. Eligible enterprises that will participate in the support structure Program



are startups for which, at the Call announcement, no more than five (5) years have passed since their official registration at the Registrar of Companies. Startups should be registered and legally established and active in the Republic of Cyprus.

Enterprises that have previously received funding from the RIF in frame of its Innovation Programmes (PRE-SEED, SEED) are not eligible for funding from the present Programme. Furthermore, for enterprises that have already received private investment from the support structure in exchange for equity capital, funding will not be provided by the RIF.

The expected impact of the support structures programs, is the attraction of private investments of at least €80,000, or sales of at least €50,000 for one of the enterprises that will be supported, during the implementation of the program. It is clarified that, private investments and revenues through sales should not come by linked parties.

In the event of a future (third) Call for Proposals, only organisations that have successfully completed one of the two cycles (Calls) of the programme or have secured accreditation from the Global Institute of Innovation (for accelerators) or the Business Incubation Management Certificate Program (designed for managers and professional staff of incubators or accelerators) will be eligible to participate.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The projects refer to the implementation of structured startups support programs which will include at a minimum the following services/activities:

- Digital Acceleration Services,
- Access to markets and commercialisation training, and
- Coaching/mentoring in startup entrepreneurship issues.

DURATION OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Up to 12 Months.

BUDGET

€ 300.000

MAXIMUM FUNDING PER PROJECT

Up to € 10.000 per startup to cover the full or part of the supporting structure's cost, and up to € 100.000 per support structure, taking into account the Call's available budget and the number of the support structures to be selected for funding.



ELIGIBLE COSTS

Personnel Cost and Cost for External Services (for mentors/coaches, trainers, staff training, events organisation etc) for the implementation of the activities described above.

Operating costs of the structure such as rent, utilities, secretarial support etc are not eligible.

Direct or indirect financing of the structures to the enterprises such as seed funding, or hosting of an enterprise in an incubator are not eligible.

It is noted that, beneficiaries that have not previously participated in the RESTART 2016-2020 Programmes, should make use of the simplified cost Method «Standard Scales of Unit Costs» for the calculation of personnel costs.

Funding will be awarded as a one-off payment, in the form of the Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2831 of 13 December 2023 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to de minimis aid.

RESTART 2016-2020 WORK PROGRAMME

All general rules and procedures for the participation of organisations and individuals, the eligible activities and costs, as well as the specific information regarding the Programme «Creation and Initial Development of Startups with International Orientation (PRE-SEED)», as well as the other RESTART 2016-2020 Programmes, are included in the **RESTART 2016-2020 Work Programme for the period 05/2022 – 06/2025**, which is the main reference document and an important information source for interested parties and can be found on the Research and Innovation Foundation's **IRIS (Innovation Research Information System) Portal** (<https://iris.research.org.cy/#/documentlibrary>).

SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

In the frame of the present Call, the following specific conditions apply:

- The support structure's program cycle start date should be later than the agreed project start date with the RIF, following the completion of the selection procedure.
- The signing of the Contracts must be completed within 1 month from the date of the invitation for Contract preparation. Otherwise, RIF reserves the right to terminate the contract preparation procedure.
- The Projects to be funded must have start date by May 1st, 2025, at the latest.
- Each organisation can receive funding as the Host Organisation for up to one (1) project in this Call.



- Payment requests for the final instalment must be submitted within thirty (30) calendar days after the end of the period to which they relate. In case of delayed submission of the Report, the Foundation reserves the right to terminate the project and the Project Contract.
- When reviewing Payment Requests, the deadline for submitting supplementary documents is set at fourteen (14) calendar days.
- Extension will not be granted for the completion of the funded projects.
- The Host Organisation is required to register the updated data regarding their ultimate beneficial owners in the Competent National Registry / Archive, as per «The prevention and suppression of money laundering and terrorist financing Law of 2007 (188(I)/2007)». The RIF maintains the right to proceed with the appropriate checks in the competent Registries to verify the registration. For this purpose, during the Contract Preparation stage, all private organisations should submit a Declaration regarding the Beneficial Owners, accompanied by the official registration proof. Additionally, all private law entities requesting funding exceeding 150,000 Euros must include in the Declaration regarding the Beneficial Owners the details of their actual beneficial owners (Full Name, ID/Passport Number, and Date of Birth).
- Funded Projects should comply with the «Do No Significant Harm» principle, according to which they must not include or support activities that could cause significant harm to any of the six environmental objectives, as per Article 17 of Regulation (EU) No 2020/852, on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment.

SUBMISSION

Proposals are submitted through the Research and Innovation Foundation's **IRIS Portal** (<https://iris.research.org.cy>).

The Project Coordinator and all local participating organisations in the Project Consortium, should register in advance on the IRIS Portal.

Potential applicants are advised to use the «**Guide for Applicants**», which contains guidelines and clarifications regarding the Submission procedure and the «**IRIS Portal User Manual**» which can be found on the IRIS Portal (<https://iris.research.org.cy/#/documentlibrary>).

The Research and Innovation Foundation encourages in all its Calls for Proposals:

- *the participation of women as Project Coordinators, and*
- *the gender-balanced formation of projects.*



The Project Proposal consists of the following parts:

1. Part A – General Information & Budget (electronic form (fields) to be completed online through the IRIS Portal).
2. Part B – Technical Annex (document to be uploaded as an Annex on the IRIS Portal in PDF format).
3. ANNEX I – Curricula Vitae - **Mandatory Submission** (document to be uploaded as an Annex on the IRIS Portal in PDF format and includes the CVs of the Coordinator and the key personnel involved in the program implementation). *It is recommended that, CVs are created according to the EUROPASS format and do not exceed 5 pages per person.*
4. ANNEX III – Call Specific Information (documents to be uploaded as an Annexes on the IRIS Portal in PDF format, duly completed and signed as requested):
 - (a) Declaration of the Host Organisation,
 - (b) Declaration for confirmation of non-debts to state Authorities, and
 - (c) Single Undertaking Declaration.

It is noted that if the required documents are not submitted during the proposal submission stage, the proposal will not be forwarded for scientific evaluation.

PROJECT SELECTION

Evaluation Procedure

Remote evaluation by an Evaluation Committee consisted by three (3) Independent Evaluators, with a Consensus Report which be communicated to the Project Coordinators.

The final decision regarding the selection of a proposal for funding by the RIF, is at the discretion of the Committee (Go, No-Go).

The Evaluation Committee's decision, which will be communicated to the Project Coordinator, is final and the submission of request for redress is not permitted.

Evaluation Criteria

- Alignment of the proposed program with the startup needs and goals. More specifically, it is evaluated whether the proposed program is tailored to the specific needs, goals and stage of development of participating startups.
- Selection Procedure: The selection procedure for the startups to be supported by the structure is adequate and reliable, and the selection criteria are relevant to the objectives and the regulations of the Call for Proposals.
- Skills and previous experience of the Project Coordinator and Key Personnel responsible for the program implementation.



- Mentor Quality and Expertise: The calibre and availability of mentors, advisors, trainers to be involved in the delivery of the program, is evaluated.
- Utilisation of networking opportunities with investors and/or potential customers.
- Post-program support: The level of support provided to startups after they graduate from the program, is evaluated. This may include continued access to resources, ongoing mentorship, alumni networks etc.
- Diversity and Inclusion: The program's efforts to promote diversity and inclusion among participating startups, and the diversity of the mentor/coaches/trainers, are evaluated.
- Previous success stories of startups supported by the Structure in terms of market introduction/turnover, and acquisition of private investments.

Selection

Proposals/Support Structures which have been deemed eligible for funding following the evaluation procedure, are selected for funding. According to the Call's available budget up to six (6) structures at a maximum will be selected for funding.

At the proposal submission, startups will be prioritised by the applicant structure. Regarding the number of startups to be supported by each structure selected for funding, the first five (5) will be considered as eligible and then, in order of submission, the sixth, seventh, etc. per structure, depending on the number of structures to be supported, and until the budget is exhausted. A priority order is followed for the allocation of additional spots.

COMPLETION

After the structure's program cycle completion, a «Progress Report» should be submitted which includes the results of the program, and a «Payment Request» with all relevant documentation justifying the personnel cost and the cost for external services (invoices)

The «Progress Report» and the «Payment Request» will be reviewed by the RIF according to the provisions of the present Call and the RESTART 2026-2020 Work Programme, and the approved funding will be released to the support structure. In case the programs cost per startup, as justified in the «Progress Report» and the «Payment Request» is less than 10.000 Euro, then the RIF will award funding according to real verified costs.

According to the RESTART 2026-2020 Work Programme, the RIF may organise monitoring visits for on-the-spot verifications if deemed necessary.



INFORMATION – CONTACT DETAILS

RIF Support Service

E-mail

support@research.org.cy

Telephone

+35722205000

The Research and Innovation Foundation may at its discretion, proceed to the extension or revocation of the present Call by applying the same publication procedure.