SPARK Consultant Innovation Fund Applications – St James's Hospital

Approval Guidance Document

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1. What is the SPARK Consultant Innovation Fund?

The Public Only Consultant Contract 2023 facilitates Medical Consultants and Dental Consultants (referred to hereafter as Consultants) to foster innovation in patient care. In order to support this, €8,000 per annum will be made available on application for each consultant for translational research and innovation projects (an expression that has a broad meaning, to include academic research and innovation projects) and such other similar projects as may be specified by the Employer from time to time.

2. Purpose of the SPARK Consultant Innovation Fund

The Innovation Fund under the POCC23 has been developed to empower and support Consultants to be active agents of change and innovation in the services they lead. It is a unique fund dedicated to leveraging the knowledge and skills of senior clinicians for the purposes of innovation.

3. Scope of SPARK Consultant Innovation Fund projects

The innovation fund provides funding for innovation and translational research projects that are not covered under the normal allocation of equipment/staff/infrastructure/other resources by the employer and are directed at patient care.

Innovation is defined as a novel idea, process, innovative/translational research, technological support, or new way of working that represents a 'positive change' in the way in which services are currently designed or delivered in practice.

Examples include:

- Innovation in terms of piloting a new development
- Equipment/diagnostic appliances etc. necessary to support the above
- Service enhancements / improvements to the clinical pathway
- Innovative research / supporting the translation of research into practice and new ways of delivering services

4. Eligibility

All Consultants who are contracted under the Public Only Consultants Contract are entitled to access an annual innovation fund of up to €8,000 annually on a pro rata basis. However, applications must also satisfy the eligibility and assessment criteria set out in the HSE guidance. Consultants are strongly encouraged to review their application against the 'Application Assessment Checklist' prior to submission to ensure their application is compliant with the guidance.

5. Applying for the SPARK Consultant Innovation Fund as a Consultant at St James's Hospital

The purpose of this document is to guide SPARK Consultant Innovation Fund (CIF) applicants through the mandatory hospital pre-approval stage of the CIF application process as well as the steps involved in the final hospital approval.

Before any CIF application can be formally submitted to the HSE, it must be reviewed and approved by the Hospital via the Research & Innovation 'SJH CIF Pre-approval form' which is located on Infonetica, and accessible via the Research & Innovation (R&I) intranet page and external webpage. The full CIF application process is outlined below. The stages highlighted in yellow are specific to St James's Hospital. **These stages are mandatory.**

- **SPARK Pre-submission phase:** Consultants are strongly encouraged to submit their applications via the Consultant Innovation Fund Pre-Submission Application Form on the application portal to receive feedback on their proposal. Applications must be submitted by 16 January 2026 and will receive feedback before the 06 March 2026. Note: Applications submitted after 16 January 2026 will not be eligible for feedback.

- **SJH Pre-Approval:** Consultants must apply for SJH hospital pre-approval of their project via the Research & Innovation 'SJH CIF Pre-Approval Application form'. The pre-approval application will be reviewed internally to ensure that the project is feasible and viable. The consultant may only proceed to a formal CIF application once hospital pre-approval has been granted.

- **SPARK Final application deadline**: 03 April 2026. Applications submitted for final review via the Consultant Innovation Fund Formal Application Form on the HSE application portal will be assessed solely against the CIF guidance using the Application Assessment Checklist, and no further changes to the application will be possible after submission

- **SPARK Fund transfers:** Scheduled for February, April, and May 2026. The final transfer will occur in May 2026. Note: All required documentation must be returned to the Spark Team by the 6th of each month to be included in that month's fund transfer.

- **Memorandum of Agreements (MOAs):** The MOA must be signed by your line manager/ clinical director and the CEO. The fully signed MOA must be submitted to the R&I office. The signed MOA will be uploaded to your pre-approval application to finalise the hospital approval. Once the approval is finalised, the project may commence.

- **SJH Progress Report:** Hospital approval to proceed is contingent on the submission of a progress report.

CIF 2026 Start

SPARK PRE-SUBMISSION FORM
https://surveys.hse.ie/s/YN5SZL/

{Optional Step, but strongly recommended by SPARK}

→ Feedback from Spark [exclusions (e.g. apps, commercialisation), KPIs, innovation focus, etc]

SJH PRE-APPROVAL FORM
Infonetica Portal
https://sjh-tuh.forms.ethicalreviewmanager.com/Account/Login

SJH Review Chain:
- SJH Finance
- Design Innovation Lab
- Equipment/IT: MPBE / IMS
- Data Protection
- Clinical Research Facility (if applic.)
- Nursing Research Access Committee (if applic.)
- Legal Office
- CEO
- R&I Office

If Approved by SJH

HSE SPARK FORMAL SUBMISSION
https://surveys.hse.ie/s/12FZCF/

Hard Yes or No from HSE Spark - no feedback or adjustment allowed at this stage

If Approved by HSE Spark

MOA SignOff
1. HSE Spark
2. Consultant (Applicant)
3. Clinical Director
4. SJH CEO

Signatures are made digitally via DocuSign this year

Fully signed MOA sent to Consultant

Consultant Uploads Signed MOA to Infonetic Portal

Funding Transfer to SJH
Feb, Apr, May 2026

SJH Finance Notification to Consultant - Funding Available

I/O and Project Number to use for raising requisitions

Project Implementation and Spending
Feb/April/May – 31st Dec 2026

N.B. Unused funding cannot be carried into 2027

1st Spark Progress Report
(Due 6 months post funding transfer)

Issue to SJH & Spark

2nd Spark Progress Report
(Due 12 months post funding transfer)

Issue to SJH & Spark

END

6. How to apply for Hospital Pre-Approval via the Research & Innovation Office

The SJH CIF Pre-Approval Application form is available on the Research & Innovation (R&I) Intranet page. The link will lead you to the application platform Infonetica, used by both JREC and the R&I office.

You will need to create an Infonetica account if you are a new user. If you have submitted an R&I application or JREC application before, then you can log in using your existing account details.

To create your CIF Pre-approval application form, select 'Create Project' in the left pane and select 'Pathway 3: CIF Pre-Approval Application' from the drop-down menu.

Add your project title and click 'create.'

7. Completing your CIF Pre-Approval form

Your CIF Pre-Approval form is split into Five Mandatory sections (Applicant details, Eligibility Screening, Funding information, Project Information) and 1 optional Data Protection section that is only mandatory when personal data is being collected

7.1   Applicant Details

This section involves adding your details, most sections are pre-populated using the information provided in your Infonetica account.

7.2   Eligibility Screening

 In this section you will be required to confirm that your contract type and your project are eligible for the SPARK CIF.

Further details on eligibility can be found on the [HSE SPARK CIF Webpage](#).

7.3   Funding Information

To ensure that the project is feasible given the potential funding available, this section includes queries about the funding being sought from the SPARK Consultant Innovation fund, and if the funding will be combined with funds from any other sources.

If the application is for pooled funds with other eligible consultants, you will be required to add this information in the funding section.

If your project will involve procuring a new device, you will be required to complete some additional questions. Please review the [SJH Procurement Policy](#) to ensure your project complies with procurement rules and thresholds.

Please note that projects planning to hire external consultants or consultancy firms are also subject to the usual procurement rules and thresholds.

Please note, if a vendor needs to be set up as part of this project, applicants must first check with procurement if the vendor is already set up in SAP. If proposed vendors are not set up, log into a New Vendor Request and complete and submit the form [Vendor Request Form](#)

You may need to discuss your project with a Finance Business Partner. Please see the list below of the current Finance Business Partners:

MED/Nursing Admin	Ann Marie Mooney	AnMooney@stjames.ie
IMS/SACC/Diagem	Ken Lawlor	KeLawlor@stjames.ie
FM/SWIFT/QSID/HOPE	Ronan Cotter	RCotter@stjames.ie

7.4   CIF Project Information

In this section, you are asked questions specifically about your SPARK CIF project. The questions in this section mirror the HSE SPARK Application and offer an opportunity for feedback before your formal application.

There are also questions that are specific to St James's Hospital. These questions are designed to ensure the project is feasible prior to your formal application.

All projects that involve the purchase of medical or IT equipment must contact the Information Management Service (IMS) and Medical Physics and Bioengineering Department (MPBE) departments and answer questions in the form that relates to these areas. Your application will be shared and reviewed by the relevant departments during the review stage.

7.5   Human Resources

If there is a team involved in this project or if the application is for a pooled fund, you can add the details of all members here.

7.6   Data Protection

If you are collecting personal data as part of the CIF project, you will be required to complete the Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) section of the Pre-Approval Application Form. The terms used in the DPIA are explained at the beginning of the section. Many questions also have information bubbles that can assist you with your responses.

8. CIF Pre-Approval Application Review Stages

Once your CIF Pre-Approval Application is complete and submitted, it will be reviewed by hospital stakeholders.

The Initial R&I Review: At this stage your full CIF Pre-Approval application will be reviewed by the R&I office for 1) acceptability and 2) quality of application. You may receive feedback on the content of your application at this stage. The purpose of the feedback is to ensure that your application is at the highest quality before being reviewed by specialist reviewers.

Design Innovation Lab Review: In this review section, your project will be reviewed to ensure the project proposal complies with the SPARK CIF Guidelines.

Data Protection Review (if required): If your project includes the collection of personal data, the application will be reviewed by the Data Protection Officer. You may receive feedback at this stage on the DPIA section of the application.

Clinical Research Facility (CRF): If you plan to run your project through the CRF, the Assistant Director of Nursing   will review the application. It is essential that you liaise with the CRF before submitting an application to discuss resources and alignment with the CRF activities.

Nursing Research Access Committee (NRAC): If your project involves Nurses or Healthcare Assistants as research participants, the NRAC will review the project.

Finance Review: If your application involves the purchase of medical or IT equipment IMS/ MPBE will be notified of your project at this point and will receive a link to review the application. You must first engage with the IMS (ggiunti@stjames.ie) and MPBE (csoraghan@stjames.ie) directly and answer questions in the form that refer to this stage – if this has not been completed, your project will be delayed at this point until the relevant department has been contacted directly. The Research Finance Manager will review your application at this point.

Legal Review (if required): If your project requires any contracts or if ethical approval is required, the legal office will review your application. You may receive feedback at this stage on contracts or agreements with external entities.

CEO Review: The CEO will review and approve all CIF Pre-approval applications.

Pre-Approval Granted: Once the CEO has signed off on the Pre-Approval application, the application will return to R&I office. The R&I programme manager will grant final sign off on the pre-approval and will issue a letter of Pre-Approval. **This is not a final approval for the CIF project but allows you to proceed to submit an application to the HSE.**

9. Full Approval to Proceed

Once you have been granted Hospital Pre-Approval, you may now submit a formal CIF Application to the HSE.

If your HSE CIF Application is successful, you will receive a Memorandum of Agreements (MOA). The MOA must be signed by your line manager / clinical director and the CEO before the project will receive final hospital approval to proceed.

You must submit a copy of the fully signed MOA to the R&I office. Submissions via email or in-person are accepted. The R&I Office will upload the fully signed MOA to your SPARK CIF Pre-Approval Application

You may now proceed with your project. HSE Spark will arrange transfer of funds to the hospital at the next Rosetta transfer window (Feb, April, May 2026).

The finance office will cross check your SPARK CIF Pre-Approval application and MOA prior to the release of funds. If the MOA has not been uploaded, the release of funds will be paused until the MOA has been received and uploaded to the application.

10.   Implementation and Purchasing

After funding has been transferred to the Hospital, it will be assigned to the budget of an Internal Order (I/O) number unique to your project. All costs are to be assigned to this IO for tracking and budget management. All purchases must follow the Hospital's procurement policy i.e. vendor set up, quote requirements etc.

Please note, if a vendor needs to be set up as part of this project, applicants must first check with procurement if the vendor is already set up in SAP. If proposed vendors are not set up, log into a New Vendor Request and complete and submit the form Vendor Request Form

Once the vendor has been approved, you may raise purchase requisitions under your I/O and forward to Finance for release. A Purchase Order is then generated and sent to the relevant supplier. You will have until the 31st of December 2026 to make your purchases for each project.

Please see procurement thresholds and link to policy below:

- < €5000 – 1 Quote
- >€ 5000 to €24,999 – 3 Quotes minimum
- >€ 25000 to €50,000 – 5 Quotes minimum
- Above €50,000 – €220,000,000 National Tender rules apply
- Above €221,000 (EU Threshold)– European Tender rules apply

11.   Progress Report

Your approval for your CIF Project is contingent on the submission of a progress report at 6 months and 12 months post transfer of funds.

Completing this progress report is mandatory. The progress report can be completed on Infonetica.

To submit your progress report, log in to Infonetica and click on your fully approved CIF Application form. In the left action pane, select 'Create Sub-Form'.

From the drop-down menu, select 'CIF Progress Report' and click create.

Once the progress report has generated, you can complete the questions and submit the report to the R&I office.

You will not be approved to apply to the CIF Fund in any subsequent year if you haven't completed a Progress Report for any previous year's CIF projects that you have led or were involved in

12.   Frequently Asked Questions

**How to view the status of my application**

Applicants can view the status of their application by logging in to their infonetica account and selecting the application they want to view the status of. When the application opens, the status is visible on the right side of the application view.

From here you can see where in the review process your application is, and you can check if the application has been returned to you with comments that need to be addressed.

In the status bar on the right side of the page, you can see that the form has not yet been submitted for review and that action is still required on the form:
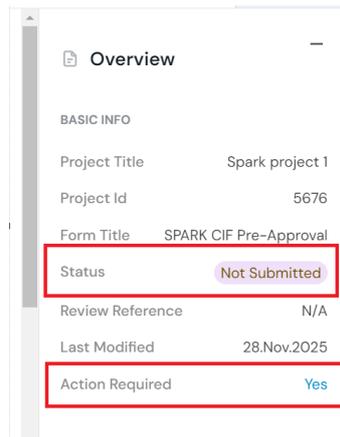

In the status bar below you can see that the form has been resubmitted to the R&I Manager for review and no action is required from the applicant:
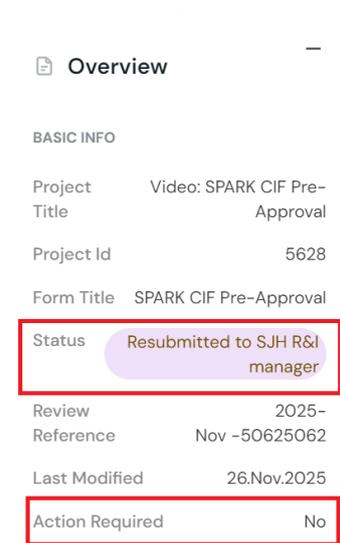
How to respond to comments

If your application has been returned with comments, you can view the comments by logging in to Infonetica and selecting the relevant application. In the right panel you will see 'reviewer comments' and the overview will state that action is required:
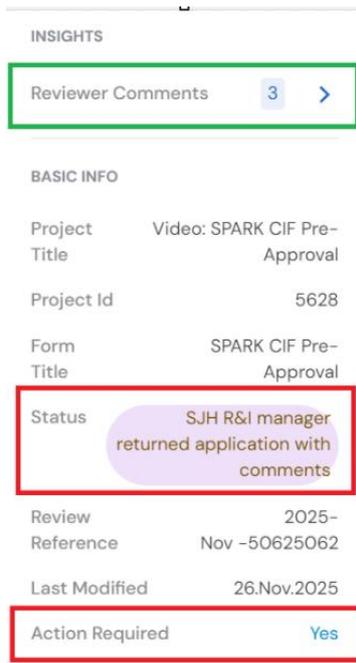
Click on the 'reviewer comments' tile and a dialogue box will open with a list of comments. Clicking on the comments will bring you to the exact location of the comment in your application. You must address all comments before resubmission.

How to share my application

You can share your application at any point during the review process. To share the application, click the 'share' button from the options listed under the project tree.

A dialogue box will open where you can input the email address of the individual you wish to share your application with. From the dialogue box you can select the permissions you want to grant.

NOTE: The collaborator must have an Infonetica account for sharing to occur
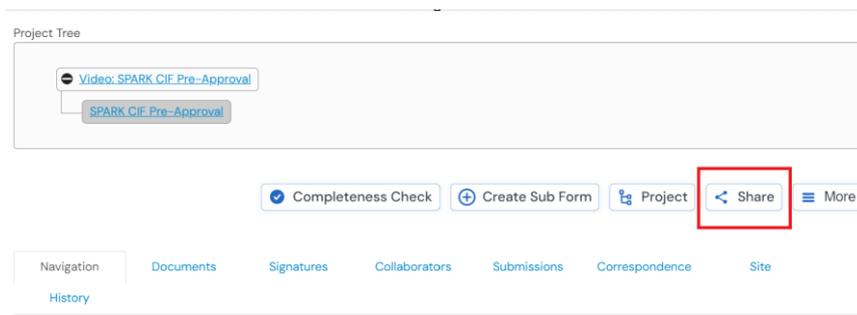
Share

Sharing a form enables others to view/edit the same form depending on the level of access you give them. Please select the users you wish to share this form with:

Collaborator email

[Collaborator email] ☐ Read

☐ Write

☐ Submit

☐ Share

☐ Create all sub forms

☐ Receive notifications

Share Close