

Spark



Seed 

Application Guide

Frontline Innovation initiative
for early stage ideas.

Introduction

Frontline Innovation Initiative

Spark Seed is a frontline innovation initiative from the HSE Spark Innovation Programme. It empowers health and social care staff to turn ideas into action, supporting smallscale, impact-focused projects that improve healthcare delivery, patient care, staff experience and system efficiency.

Applicants can access up to €5,000 in funding, develop valuable skills in human-centered design and pitching and gain national recognition for their projects. Spark Seed opens for applications at various points during the year. Each opening is followed by a pitching event, providing opportunities for staff to bring forward new ideas. The pitching dates can be found on the Spark website. Please take note of the pitching dates before you submit your application form.

[Pitching Dates](#)



About Spark Seed

Spark Seed supports frontline healthcare workers to explore new ideas or trial practical, impact-focused projects. It provides access to skills training, funding and a platform to share and scale innovation across the HSE.

Purpose of Spark Seed

Funding

Up to €5,000 to test your healthcare innovation in your workplace.

Knowledge Sharing

Share and promote innovations nationally across the HSE.

Upskilling

Learn design thinking and pitching skills through our bespoke Design Thinking workshop (CPD points available). Fully funded for HSE & Section 38 employees.

[Workshop Dates](#)



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HSE Spark supports frontline healthcare and social care professionals to translate their insights into lasting innovation.

Are you a clinician or frontline worker with an idea for how to streamline systems or improve outcomes?

Contact us:
spark@hse.ie
www.hse.ie/spark

 HSE Spark Innovation Programme
 @spark_programme
 HSE Spark Innovation Programme

When to Apply

When is Seed Open for Applications?

Rather than one fixed annual call, Spark Seed opens several times throughout the year. To stay informed, we encourage colleagues to keep an eye on our LinkedIn page and website, where upcoming calls, deadlines and guidance materials are posted as soon as they are announced.

[LinkedIn Page](#)



[Pitching Dates](#)



Who is Eligible to Apply?

Doctors, Nurses, Midwives, HSE recognised Health and Social Care Professionals and Pharmacists currently employed by the HSE or Section -38 funded organisations are eligible to apply.

The lead applicant must be one of these eligible professionals. If you have an innovative idea but do not belong to one of the listed groups, you may still apply as long as the project lead is an eligible professional.

Projects must:

Be led by a frontline healthcare worker, from the eligibility list above.

Address unmet healthcare needs.

Be trialled with a modest budget.

Be deliverable within 12 months with submission of a report on completion.

How Do I Apply?

Attend a Design Thinking Workshop

There are multiple workshops run throughout the year. While not mandatory, applicants who have attended a Design Thinking Workshop will have insight into processes which support innovative project development and implementation of these skills will strengthen applications.

[Click to register →](#)

Apply Online

Submit an online application form.

[Click to register →](#)

Pitch

If shortlisted from the application process, present your idea to a panel and receive constructive feedback. This is an online pitching event.

Funded

Access up to €5,000

Completing your Project

Projects must be finished within 12 months.

Why Apply?

For Frontline Healthcare Workers

- Opportunity to turn ideas into action with funding, training, and support.
- Empowerment to make real improvements for patients, colleagues, and services.
- Access to a national network of healthcare innovators.

For Managers

- Investing in staff-led innovation boosts morale, retention and ownership.
- Builds skills in design thinking, pitching and measuring impact.
- Support staff to improve services and maximise resources with innovative solutions.

“

The whole Seed process was a great learning experience....it was absolutely fantastic.

”

“

Spark Seed gave me the impetus to get my project started.

”

“

The training was wonderful and the advice and guidance is super supportive.

”

Managing Funds

Finance

Funding letter

Successful Applicants will receive a funding letter from the Spark Team to share with your management and Finance Team. This confirms that Spark will reimburse your hospital/site for the agreed costs of your project, once payment has been made by the site. It will also have your unique project code to be used in relation to any future correspondence with Spark.

Initial Payment

Your hospital/healthcare site pays for the agreed costs of your project initially. HSE Spark can only transfer money to HSE sites, not outside agencies like educational institutions, third parties or personal accounts.

Reimbursement Process

Receipts

Please submit these receipts to the Spark team at spark@hse.ie for reimbursement. Please include your sites unique Business Processing Code (BPC) with the invoice so we know where to send the money. Please reference your unique project code with all correspondence.

Reimbursement

The approved costs of the project will be reimbursed by HSE Spark to your site in the next transfer window.



Project Eligibility

Spark Seed supports practical, frontline innovation projects that can be delivered within 12 months and make a real difference to patients, service users or staff.

As innovation is always moving forward, an idea that was once considered novel may now be viewed as common practice. This doesn't take away from its value, it simply means Spark Seed is designed to support the next wave of new ideas.

Applicants are encouraged to think about what makes their idea different, fresh or uniquely suited to their setting. Even small innovations can have a big impact when they introduce a new perspective, tool or way of working.

✕ Examples of Projects Not Eligible for Funding

- App development
- Projects involving artificial intelligence
- Development of products or services with potential for commercialisation
- Estates & furnishings
- Quality Improvement initiatives

✕ Funding Cannot Be Used For

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| • Printing fees | • Whole Time Equivalents (WTEs) |
| • Undergraduate or postgraduate education | • Conference attendance |
| • Booking venues | • Clinical research |
| • Clerical support | • Catering costs |
| | • Travel expenses |



FAQs

Who can apply?

Doctors, Nurses, Midwives, HSE recognised Health and Social Care Professionals and Pharmacists currently employed by the HSE or Section -38 funded organisations are eligible to apply.

How much funding is available?

Up to €5,000 will be granted based on specific asks. Not every part of your project ask may be funded – it is up to the judging panel based on the merits of your pitch.

How long do I have to implement my project timeline?

Projects must be completed within 12 months.

If I am successful at pitch, will there be supports from the Spark Team during the implementation of my project?

Two optional mentoring sessions are available to support implementation. Innovators will be invited to schedule up to two mentoring sessions with a member of the Spark team during the 12-month period. It is the responsibility of the innovator to request these meetings should they be needed.

Do I need to write a report, if my project is funded?

Yes. Applicants must submit a short final report within 12 months of receipt of funding letter. Please note, your site will be reimbursed following submission of final report and invoices.

What kinds of projects are suitable?

Projects that are innovative, address an unmet need, on a modest budget to improve staff/patient experience/workflows

Who pays upfront?

Your hospital or site covers the agreed costs of your project initially. Spark will then reimburse your site once invoices and final report are received by us.

What if I am shortlisted but cannot make the pitching event?

Please take note of the dates of the pitching events on our website before you apply. If you cannot be available to pitch, please withhold your application until the next round of Spark Seed.

I want to apply for Spark Seed funding but I have not completed a Design Thinking Workshop.

Attendance at a design thinking workshop is not mandatory before application, however, applicants will be shortlisted based on their ability to demonstrate design thinking and person-centred principles. Completing a workshop provides insight into processes that support early-stage innovation and can strengthen an application.

I attended a Design Thinking Workshop before. Do I have to do it again?

No, once you have previously completed a Design Thinking Workshop, you will have the necessary insight into processes which support innovative project development for all Spark Initiatives going forward.

I was awarded Spark Seed funding in the past. Can I apply again?

Yes. You can apply for Spark Seed funding more than once. However this must not be for the same project. Spark Seed supports testing of new innovative ideas within a service. Innovators need to capture and demonstrate the value of this project so that it can be financially sustained locally. Spark Seed cannot provide recurrent funding for projects.

I was awarded Spark Seed funding for my project in the past. Can I apply again to extend the lifetime of the project or implement a different version of the project?

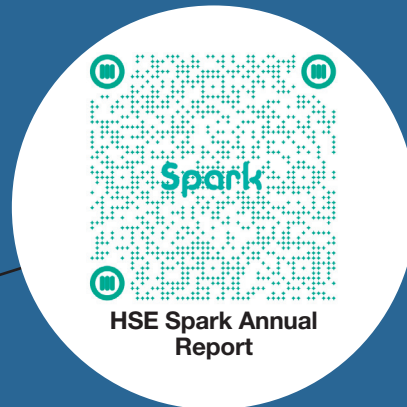
No. As above, Spark Seed applications must not be for the same project. Spark Seed supports testing of new innovative ideas within a service, it cannot provide recurrent funding for projects.

I do not have the support of my line manager. Can I still apply?

Local support is essential for any Spark Seed project to be successful. You will need your line manager's approval to apply. We strongly recommend engaging with your line manager and other key stakeholders as early as possible, so you have the backing and resources needed to implement your idea.

I have an innovation idea but don't know if I should apply?

Complete one of our free, online Design Thinking Workshops to get fresh perspectives on your idea or reach out to a member of the Spark team on spark@hse.ie



Spark



spark@hse.ie
www.hse.ie/spark

 HSE Spark Innovation Programme

 @spark_programme

 HSE Spark Innovation Programme

HSE Spark

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