



SPÓRT ÉIREANN
SPORT IRELAND

**2024 Sport Ireland
Research Funding Scheme
3-Year Project
Application Guidelines**

Deadline for submissions – 5 pm on Monday, 8th April 2024

Introduction

In 2024, Sport Ireland will provide support to recognised **National Governing Bodies (NGBs)**, **Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs)** and other **Sport Ireland Funded Bodies** strictly based on the conditions and criteria outlined in this document. Launched in 2021, the **Research Grants Scheme (RGS)** aims to support research endeavours across the Irish sports sector. In 2023 Sport Ireland extended the scheme to include a unique opportunity for eligible sports bodies to embark on a 3-year funded research pathway in the form of a doctoral research programme. We are pleased to confirm that this pathway will continue in 2024. It will again be necessary for any such project to be carried out in collaboration with a recognised Higher Education Institution (HEI). Sport Ireland is therefore seeking research applications that support the stated actions and goals from the [National Sports Policy \(2018 – 2027\)](#) and the [National Physical Activity Plan \(2016\)](#). Projects which build on research carried out to date and demonstrate appropriate partnership working with third level institutions or other relevant research agencies will be scored higher on assessment.

All **RGS** projects are offered through a competitive bid process and will be assessed against the criteria set in the application form and guidelines document.

- **NGB's/LSP's/Funded Bodies seeking funding will be required to submit a detailed application form.**
- **All applicants will be required to partner with a recognised Higher Education Institution for the duration of project.**
- **Each funded body can lead on only one 3- year application; however, funded bodies can partner on as many applications as they wish.**
- **Applications will be considered up to a maximum of €70,000.**
- **Funding expenditure must be completed by the end of August 2027.**
- **NGB's/LSP's/Funded Bodies are required to submit a signed copy of the Information & Declaration Form. Electronic versions of the handwritten signatures are also accepted at this time as well as email confirmation of signature.**
- **Completed application forms must be submitted before 5 pm on Monday, 8th April 2024 to research@sportireland.ie. Late applications will not be accepted.**

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About the Scheme

The RGS provides an opportunity for sporting bodies to undertake research on issues that are relevant to their own unique contexts. Furthermore, it will provide a platform for NGBs/LSPs/Funded Bodies to build meaningful relationships with HEI's whilst building their own understanding and capability on how to do research.

The grant scheme is suitable for targeted research projects where sports bodies identify specific questions or problems in which they hope to gain insights. These may include but are not limited to: recruiting new participants or members, improving coach or athlete development, better understanding of participant or athlete pathways, addressing social or gender gradients within their sport, testing the efficacy of particular initiatives, undertaking formative research to inform innovative projects, evaluating the effectiveness of sports programmes or addressing questions related to any of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#). This may be achieved through a variety of quantitative and qualitative methodologies such as surveys, interviews, focus groups or research related to sports science or new technologies. All research projects should aspire to uncover novel insights into the specific challenges sport bodies experience as identified in the application form.

This scheme specifically aims to bridge the gap between *research*, *policy* and *practice* by addressing the disconnect that can emerge between those who do research and those who apply research. Research undertaken by sports bodies through this fund may lead to new insights, which in turn could potentially lead to new ideas that may be developed and advanced through other Sport Ireland funding initiatives.

Research Grant Scheme (RGS) Application Form

Only the official Sport Ireland RGS application form will be accepted, this can be found attached to the announcement email. Deadline for submission of completed applications is **5 pm Monday, 8th April 2024**.

The funding application form is divided into six sections. *Questions with an asterisk (*) are a required submission*. Each section will be further explained below.

Please note this is a competitive bid process and all applications will be assessed against the criteria set.

Section 1- Application Lead (Questions 1 – 5)

This fund is open to NGBs/LSPs/Funded Bodies to develop and deliver innovative sport and physical activity research initiatives and projects commencing in 2024 with completion by August 2027. The grant scheme is also open to retiring High Performance athletes with relevant academic qualifications, although the application, funding mechanism, and project management must be through an NGB/LSP/Sport Ireland Funded Body.

In this section we ask that you please list the contact details of the *lead applicant* from an NGB, LSP, or other Sport Ireland funded body. Please note that the email address provided in this section will be used as the main contact point for all application and project related correspondence.

Section 2- Project Partners (Questions 6 – 12)

All applicants for the 3 Year pathway will be required to partner and collaborate with a recognised HEI. Within this section you will be required to list the details of the organisation with whom you intend to partner on the proposed research project. This should include the name and role of the individual who will lead the project on behalf of the partnering HEI (e.g. Principal Investigator, supervisor etc.).

We also ask you include a letter of intent from the relevant HEI which outlines their willingness to collaborate on the project. The HEI and/or funded Sports Body should confirm their commitment to provide additional funding to appropriately support a full-time doctoral researcher working for the duration of the 3-year project.

Section 3 – Project Scope (Questions 13 – 17)

13. Research Area

Please indicate which research area best represents your proposed application. If your proposed research area is not listed, include this under the 'Other' category.

14. Lay Abstract

Provide a lay abstract outlining your proposed research. This should be written in a manner accessible to a non-expert audience. If your project is chosen for funding, this abstract will be used to give other practitioners and researchers within the Sport sector insight into your research project *

15. Central Research Question, Aims & Objectives

Provide a clear explanation of the research questions that will be explored over the course of the project and discuss the intended aims and objectives of the research. This section is an opportunity for applicants to concisely articulate the specific question they are asking and how they will answer it. *

16. Existing Literature

Provide a summary of the background to the proposed research topic via existing literature, i.e. what is currently known. This is an opportunity for applicants to demonstrate their understanding of the problem they are interested in. *

17. Advancement of Knowledge

Outline how the proposed research will advance existing research and knowledge, i.e., how does this proposed research fill a knowledge gap. This is an opportunity for applicants to demonstrate the future impact of their proposed work within the sports sector. How will this work help your organisation or Sport Ireland achieve their strategic goals? *

Section 4 – Project Methods (Questions 18 – 21)

18. Research Design and Methodologies

Discuss the proposed research design and methodologies. Sufficient detail should be provided to ensure an understanding of the research topic and how best to tackle the research issue. This is an opportunity for applicants to demonstrate they have a clear plan on how to execute their project. *

19. Data Collection & Analysis

Outline the types of data that will be collected as part of the project (e.g. qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods etc.). Discuss how this data will be analysed. This section provides an opportunity for applicants to demonstrate their understanding of data analysis, which is an important step in generating meaningful and actionable insights. *

20. Ethics

Sport Ireland is committed to protecting all research participants in terms of their personal safety, data and psychological wellbeing. In this section applicants are required to clearly consider any ethical or data protection issues that may arise prior to and over the course their research programme. Some important sections to consider here include how participants will be recruited, provide informed consent, understand their rights as participants, and how their data will be used and protected. *

21. Ethical Approval

Please confirm whether you will be seeking ethical approval from a recognised body prior to carrying out you research (e.g. university ethics committee).

Section 5 – Project Management (Questions 22 – 26)

22. Professional / Academic Experience of Applicant & Research Partner

Outline both the professional and/or academic experience of the lead applicant and academic partner. Discuss how this experience might enhance the quality of your research.

23. Milestones & Deliverables

In this section applicants are required to outline a project timeline; this should include a breakdown of projected programme milestones, potential outcomes and deliverables. This section provides applicants an opportunity to outline in more detail the plan for implementing their research methods.

24. Risks

Discuss any risks that may compromise the research team's ability to achieve these deliverables and list potential ways to manage the risks. This section provides applicants an opportunity to demonstrate that they have considered contingencies in the event of unexpected changes to the project. *

25. Partnership Management

One of the overarching aims of RGS is to build capacity and develop partnerships between Sport Ireland funded organisations and external institutions with expertise in the field of research. In this section, please describe how your organisation would manage such a relationship over the duration of the project. Think about how your collaboration will operate over the duration of the project. Elements to consider include delegation of work, the sharing of resources and expertise, project communication, use of project management tools or platforms for secure collaboration, scheduling of research meetings etc.

26. Dissemination

Outline plans for sharing the project learnings. This includes activities such as publications, conference attendance and presentations, reports and outreach activities. Please note the dissemination activities can go beyond the 3-year funding window. This is an opportunity for applicants to demonstrate how they plan for their research output to make a meaningful and sustainable impact in the sports sector.

Section 6 – Funding (Questions 27 – 29)

27. Requested Funding

The amount of funding you are requesting from Sport Ireland (up to a maximum of €70,000).

28. Matched Funding

It is expected that the HEI and/or funded Sports Body commit to providing a level of matched funding to appropriately support a full-time doctoral researcher working for the duration of the 3-year project. Please include details on the amount and the funder. **** A level of matched funding from partner organisations is required for all 3-year project applications.***

29. Project Expenditure

Please provide an extensive breakdown of project expenditure. If receiving funding from additional sources this should be included within the overall budget. Please note only current expenditure can be funded as part of the scheme.

Additional Details/Documents

Partnership

All funded programmes in this RGS 3-year pathway will require the Sport Ireland funded body to partner with a third level University/IT/HEI. Projects demonstrating appropriate partnerships with appropriate levels of matched funding will be scored higher on assessment.

Letter of Agreement/Intent

Please attach a letter of agreement or intent from your research partner as part of your application submission with a confirmation on the level of matched funding offered. **** Please note this is a requirement for all 3-year project applications.***

All applications are also required to attach a signed copy of the Information & Declaration Form, as part of their application submission. Electronic versions of the handwritten signatures are accepted, as well as email confirmation of signature.

Scoring

Scoring to be applied to applications based on:

- **Innovation:** What is the problem? Who does this affect? What work has already been done?
- **Feasibility:** Are the methods appropriate? How have ethical considerations been addressed? Are the timeline and budget realistic? Are there experienced project leads?
- **Strategy:** Do the project objectives align with your organisation’s strategic goals?
- **Assessment:** How will the research questions be answered? Are the measures appropriate? How will project milestones be measured?
- **Partnership:** How will the project team work together and learn from each other?
- **Sustainability:** What will the impact of this project be? How will the research findings be disseminated? How might this research advance your organisation’s knowledge into the future?

Timescales

All projects must be completed by September 2027. Below is an indicative timescale of the fund.

Event	Date
RGS Funding scheme launched / submission live	February 2024
RGS application closing date (5pm*)	8 th April 2024
Successful applicants notified	May 2024
Funded schemes project activation meeting	September 2024
Funded Schemes Research Meeting I	June/July 2025
Funded Schemes Project Midterm Report & Research Meeting II	June/July 2026
Funded Schemes Research Meeting III	June/July 2027
RGS Concludes	August 2027
Final Report Submitted	August 2027

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Terms and conditions

The funding guidelines are to be read in conjunction with Sport Ireland 2024 Terms and Conditions of Grant Investment.

Acknowledgement

In the promotion and dissemination of the research findings funded by this scheme, Sport Ireland requests that the Sport Ireland logo be included on all materials and for Sport Ireland to be acknowledged as the funders/co-funders in presentations, publications and related materials. If you have any questions throughout the application process, please refer to this guidelines document or contact research@sportireland.ie for further information.