



MERLIN

THE MATERIALS
LAB INCUBATOR

**Application management
in the scope of
The Materials Lab Incubator**

2nd Spark Fund

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Applying to the present document: The selected masculine form always equally includes females.

Consequent double designations will be left out for better readability.

Application management

1. General Information

This guide serves as support for the teams during the application process.

1.1 Funding

The whole budget of a **Spark Fund** amounts to a maximum of up to 100 000 Euro/team in total.

1.2 Duration

The project period of a **Spark Fund** regularly encloses 8 months.

1.3 Employment

Personal costs are fundable from 60 000 Euro up to 66 000 Euro. To be eligible, you need to be employed by RWTH Aachen University during the period of funding.

1.4 Location

The workplace will be located at the *its* Baesweiler and the RWTH Aachen University.

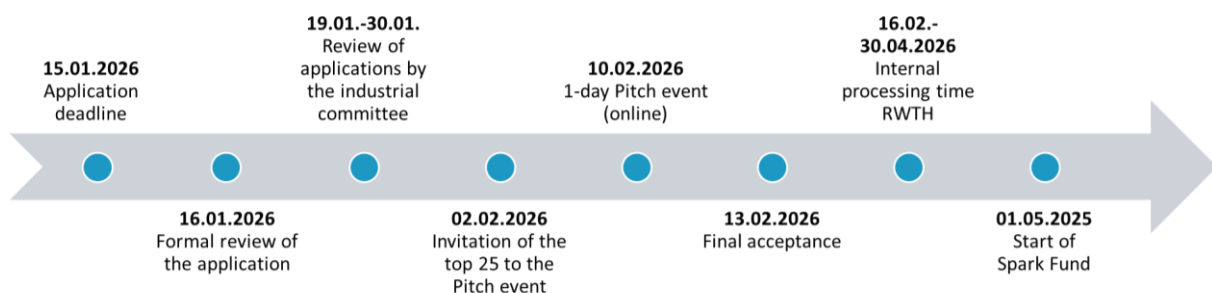
1.5 Regulation for Intellectual Property (IP)

IP negotiation complies with the RWTH Innovation guidelines for IP regulation. [The guidelines](#) can be found on the [RWTH Innovation website](#). If you have any further questions, please contact the head office (info@materials-lab-incubator.com).

2. Application Management

2.1 General Conditions and Selection Process

The application language is English. After completing an [online questionnaire](#) on F6S Network Limited (online platform for application management within the start-up community), including the submission of a [5-slider and a financial plan](#), applications will be formally reviewed by the head office. Templates for the 5-slider and the financial plan are provided by the office as a [download](#). The applications will be evaluated by the industrial committee, which consists mainly of venture capitalists. The best 25 teams will be invited for a virtual pitch to the committee. To receive funding, team members will be employed at RWTH Aachen University during the period of funding.



The teams must fulfill the following requirements regarding their constitution and status:

- At least one person per team.
- Team members applying for the funding need to have a valid work permit in Germany.
- At least one person per team must be available in Aachen/Baesweiler during the funding period.
- Team members applying for funding will be employed at the RWTH Aachen University for the period of funding.

The application needs to address at least one Focus topic area in the scope of The Materials Lab Incubator to be considered for funding.

2.2. Funding Eligibility

Eligible applicants are teams of 1 or more members who have not founded a legal entity in the funding area yet. A prerequisite for applicants is a valid working permit for Germany, since applicants funded by the Spark Fund need to be hired by the RWTH Aachen University for the period of funding to enter the S1-Labs and to take part in the coaching. Therefore, at least one team member needs to be available in Aachen/Baesweiler during the funding period. If the team is currently funded by another public party, they are not eligible for funding.

2.3 Quality Criteria

2.3.1 Questionnaire and Formal Review

It is recommended that the questions defined in the online questionnaire be answered as precisely and completely as possible to ensure that all formal criteria for funding eligibility are met. The formal criteria that will be reviewed after submission are as follows:

- Constitution of the applying team and availability during the funding period.
- Valid work permission in Germany during the funding period.
- Non-established legal status of the applicant legal entity prior to and during the funding period. In case a legal entity was already found before the funding period, the company cannot be economically active, e.g., selling products, or having any other active income.
- Exclusion of public double funding.
- Connection to at least one of the three Focus topic areas within the scope of The Materials Lab Incubator.
- Financial plan in place for the funding period.

2.3.2 5-Slider

The application deck needs to be submitted via our [online application tool](#) along with the financial plan. Your submitted deck must compile a minimum of 5 slides (including a title slide of personal choice/design) and a maximum of 10 slides in total. Applicants are advised to focus on quality and clarity, set a clear focus, and effectively communicate the essential aspects of the project within the slide limit.

Quality of the 5-slider will be evaluated by the industrial committee according to the following criteria:

1. Motivation & Executive Summary
 - Team motivation & passion
 - A summarizing graphic of the project
2. Business Idea
 - Plausibility of the idea origin
 - Novelty, differentiation & envisioned impact
 - Preliminary work and state of the art
 - Problem definition & value proposition
 - Working plan to
 - a. specify the research needs
 - b. present the focus on translational work towards a market-ready product.
3. Team & Network
 - Competences/roles in the founding team
 - Network/support awareness
 - GAP analysis & self-awareness
 - Overall team potential (impression)
4. Market & Competitors
 - Awareness of potential market/need
 - Identification of initial target customer
 - Awareness of alternatives/competition
 - Product solution
 - Weaknesses & strengths vs. chances & risks
5. Overall Impression & Formal Aspects
 - Overall clarity & professionalism
 - Conciseness & focus
 - Adherence to guidelines
 - Logical flow
 - Use of visuals

2.3.3 Quality criteria for further application process

Concerning funding eligibility, the following quality criteria have to be considered in the team applications. All of the criteria below need to be addressed by the application and will be evaluated by our VC-focused jury during the application process:

- Compliance with at least one of the three Focus topic areas.
- Use of renewable resources (ideally locally available) in particular.
- Potential for scalable production of bio-functionalized materials.
- Potential for the realization of a marketable product or a Start-Up business in the Rhenish Mining Area.
- Potential to generate jobs (in addition to the applying team members).

In addition, the envisioned impact of the business idea on the market and society should be mentioned in brief. (Can be mentioned in the 5-slider)

Other criteria to be considered for the success of a Spark Fund application are:

- Expression of interest/participation of industrial partners (e.g., by a letter of intent).
- Contribution to the preservation of livelihoods in a sustainable circular economy.

2.4 Financial Planning

All expenditures are processed according to cost-based expenses in line with the general financial conditions for “The Materials Lab Incubator”. The travel expenses for the project are handled according to the conditions of the [Landesreisekostengesetz](#).

The financial plan for the funding period has to be submitted to the head office with the application. The calculation must be plausible and reasonable. All necessary templates are provided as a [download](#) by the office.

2.4.1 Refundable Expenses

The substantial impact on translational work towards a market-ready product has to be reflected in the proposed financial resources.

Generally, only expenses can be refunded that are essential for the realization of the project, have been part of the application, and do not cover the basic equipment. In the download section, an [information sheet](#) about the funding eligibility of different positions can be found. The information sheet should be considered for the calculation.

Financial resources within the following categories of expenses are eligible for funding and can be applied for:

Personnel costs	<p>Personnel costs per team are fundable from 60 000 Euro to 66 000 Euro (including gross salary and around 30% employer's contribution.). This includes up to 53 600 Euro for scientific staff and up to 6 400 Euro for student assistants.</p> <p>Assignment should be conducted in personal months.</p> <p>Employment periods should ideally not be shorter than eight months. The need for all staff categories has to be explained in the application as single positions. The final classification into payment groups is carried out by the RWTH Human Resources Department.</p>
Utilities up to 800 Euro	<p>Small devices and (if necessary) computers can be funded with up to 2 400 Euro in total.</p>
Mentoring	<p><u>A fixed sum of 14 000 Euro per team will be automatically deducted from the budget for a mandatory program. Please plan with these mandatory expenses.</u></p> <p>The mandatory mentoring might be arranged as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + 2 intensive mentoring sessions + 1 network event + Up to 20 hours of direct coaching per team + Up to 40+ hours of direct mentorship per team + Venture onboarding and management + consulting by 10 - 15 personally selected mentors (for all teams in the cohort), who are experienced entrepreneurs, corporate executives, and investors <p>(All information on the final structure of the mentoring program is subject to change. The offer depicted above only serves as an example.)</p>
External services	<p>e.g., external expenses, external services like sequencing, order of primers, coaching, patent research, and FTO analysis can be funded with up to 14 400 Euro in total.</p>
Materials	<p>Up to 6 000 Euro per team can be used for e.g., materials, chemical substances.</p>
Travel Expenses	<p>Only inland travel is eligible for funding with up to 3 200 Euro in total (e.g., participation in fairs, start-up events) and handled according to the conditions of the LRKG.</p>
Equipment	<p>Only eligible for equipment up to 800 Euro (see Utilities up to 800 Euro)</p>

Within the planning of the overall budget, mandatory expenses for personnel costs and mentoring need to be taken into account. The applicants need to give reasons for the planned

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expenses and how they will improve the translation of their idea and the project for a market-ready product. The expenses must be eligible for funding according to the project proposal and the STARK- funding guidelines ([information sheet](#)).

2.4 Application Submission

The application must be submitted according to the stated deadline, complete ([incl. all appendices](#)), and in electronic form only to the office via the F6S Network Limited (online platform for application management within the start-up community) [online questionnaire](#). Prior to the official submission of the application, a preliminary review by the office regarding the formal criteria is possible via Email (info@materials-lab-incubator.com) (see below). After the official submission of the application, the applying team receives a confirmation receipt from the office.

The preliminary review of the application will include:

- Eligibility of the applying team.
- Compliance with the Focus topic areas of The Materials Lab Incubator.
- Financial Planning (formal aspects).

For a preliminary review, application drafts must be sent to the office at least seven days before the end of the submission period. It should be clearly noted in the manuscript that the submission is a draft and not the final application. The draft, marked as 'for review,' should be sent to the email address: info@materials-lab-incubator.com. Only one preliminary feedback from the head office can be offered per applying team.