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# THE MATERIALS LAB INCUBATOR

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## **Application management in the scope of The Materials Lab Incubator – MerLin**

### **1<sup>st</sup> Spark Fund**

*General disclaimer: This document is a preliminary version. It is subject to change without notice.*

*The final version will be made available in the 17th calendar week at the latest.*

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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.

## 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. 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 up to 60 000€. to be eligible you need to be employed by RWTH during the period of funding.

### 1.4 Location

Work will be located at the its Baesweiler and the RWTH Aachen University.

### 1.5 Regulation for intellectual property (IP)

IP regulation 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](mailto: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 fs6, 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 of a majority of venture capitalists. The best 15 teams will be invited for a virtual pitch in front of the committee. The selected applications will then be approved by the RWTH rectorate. Team members involved in the funding will be employed at RWTH during the period of funding.



The teams must fulfill the following requirements regarding their configuration:

- At least one person per team,
- At least one person per team must be available during the funding period in Aachen/Baesweiler
- Team members involved in the funding need to have a valid working permission in Germany
- Team members involved in the funding will be employed at the RWTH for the period of funding

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

## 2.2. Funding Eligibility

Eligible applicants are founding teams of 1 or more persons 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 questionnaire be answered as precisely and completely as possible to ensure all formal criteria for funding eligibility are met. The formal criteria that will be reviewed after submission are as follows:

- Configuration of the applying team and availability during the funding period
- Work permission in Germany during the funding period
- Establishment of a legal entity before or during the funding period
- Exclusion of public double funding
- Involvement of the Focus Topic Areas within the scope of The Materials Lab Incubator
- Financial planning (formal aspects)"

### 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 have a minimum of 5 slides (including a title slide that you should create) and a maximum of 10 slides in total. Focus on quality and clarity over quantity, get straight to the point, and effectively communicate the essential aspects of your project within the limit.

The 5-slider will be evaluated by the industrial committee by the following criteria:

1. Motivation & Executive Summary
  - Team`s motivation & passion
  - Summarizing graphic
2. Business idea
  - Plausibility of idea origin
  - Novelty, differentiation & envisioned impact
  - Preliminary work and state of the art
  - Problem definition & value proposition
  - Working plan to specify the research needs and the oriented work on translation
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 fulfilled 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 biofunctionally integrated 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, briefly mention the envisioned impact of your founding idea.

Other criteria are not directly related to the region but are helpful for the success of a Spark Fund application:

- Expression of interest/participation of industrial partners
- Contribution to the preservation of livelihoods in a sustainable circular economy

### 2.4 Financial Planning

All expenses occur on an expenses base in line with the general financial conditions for the “The Materials Lab Incubator”. The travel expenses for the project are handled according to the conditions of the LRKG

The financial plan is to be submitted to the head office with the application. The calculation must be executed plausibly and carefully. All necessary templates will be provided as a [download](#) by the office.

#### 2.4.1 Refundable Expenses

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

Generally, only expenses can be refunded which are essential for the realization of the project, have been applied for, and do not belong to the basic equipment.

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

<b>Personnel costs</b>	Personnel costs up to 60 000 € per team are fundable. This includes up to 53 600 € for scientific staff and up to 6 400 € for temporary scientific staff. Planning in should be conducted in person months. The need for all staff categories has to be explained in the application in single positions. The final classification into pay groups is carried out by the RWTH Human Resources Department.
<b>Utilities up to 800€</b>	Small devices and (if nec.) computer
<b>Mentoring</b>	<u>A fixed sum 14 000 € per team for a mandatory mentoring program will automatically deducted from the budget. Please plan with these mandatory expenses.</u>  The mandatory mentoring might arranged as followed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ 2 intensive mentoring sessions</li> <li>✚ Up to 20 hours of direct coaching per team</li> <li>✚ Up to 40+ hours of direct mentorship per team</li> <li>✚ Venture onboarding and management</li> <li>✚ 10 - 15 personally selected mentors, who are experienced entrepreneurs, corporate executives, and investors</li> </ul> (All information on the final structure of the mentoring program is subject to change. The offer as above serves only as an example.)
<b>External services</b>	External expenses, external services like sequencing, primer, coaching, patent research, FTO analysis
<b>Materials</b>	Up to 6 000 € per team e.g., materials, substances
<b>Travel Expenses</b>	Only domestic travel is eligible for funding (e.g., participation in fairs, start-up events) and handled according to the conditions of the LRKG.
<b>Equipment</b>	Only eligible for equipment up to 800 €

During 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 expenses and how they will improve the translation of the idea and the project for a market-ready product.

## 2.5 Application Submission

The application must be submitted timely manner, completely ([incl. all appendices](#)), and only in electronic form to the office via the fs6 [online questionnaire](#). Prior to the official submission of the application, a preliminary review by the office regarding the formal criteria is possible via E-mail ([info@materials-lab-incubator.com](mailto: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
- Matching with Focus topic areas of The Materials Lab Incubator
- Financial Planning (formal aspects)

For a preliminary review, application drafts in an almost final version 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](mailto:info@materials-lab-incubator.com).