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AI-generated content may be incorrect.

ICON Project

Application Document Project Description

Version July 2025

*The questions in this document serve to gain a better understanding of your idea and project or to obtain information relevant to the evaluation criteria that will be used to assess your application. It is therefore important that you answer* ***each question separately.*** *Make sure you are familiar with the* [*ICON project type*](https://www.vlaio.be/nl/media/850) *before writing your application.*

*A properly prepared application document is essential for a smooth and fast evaluation process. Each question should be answered* ***separately, briefly and concisely.***

*You can assume that your application will be read by someone with basic knowledge of your industry. If necessary, the information you provide can be relayed to third-party experts. If you wish to submit detailed information that should not be relayed to third-party experts, please upload a separate file along with your digital submission, clearly marked as “only for VLAIO” in both the filename as well as the first page of the document.*

*The application documents for research projects is split into 2 documents*

* *Project description section: company description + workplan + expertise*
* *Impact section: strategic importance + added value + path towards market + importance support*

**Preparation and composition of the project application:**

* *This template should be seen as a tool to format the project application. The resulting document, as well as the other attachments, should then be submitted.*
* *When filling in the project application it is explicitly recommended to make sure you are familiar with the* [*ICON project type*](https://www.vlaio.be/nl/media/2397) *before writing your application* *for explanation of the requested information!*
* ***All template information and additional information****-* ***should be deleted or replaced with your own text.***

**Important note regarding maximum document size**

The character limit for this document is 150.000 characters.

The number of characters is defined as the character count including spaces provided by Microsoft Word (i.e., the value of “Tekens (inclusief spaties)” in the dialog box “Woorden tellen” with the checkbox “Inclusief tekstvakken, voet- en eindnoten” checked).

Exceeding the character limit may result in an inadmissible application.

**Important note regarding confidentiality**

This document is forwarded as is to external experts.

# Project context and summary

## Business activities and project details

Briefly describe the activities of each business partner. What do you currently offer your customers and in what market, or what do you have in the pipeline? Emphasize specific activities, business units and markets that are related to this project.

Describe the specific reasons for the research project (problem, opportunity) and how the idea for the project came about. Explain how the proposal for the research project relates to your company’s current activities: is the research project in line with your current business activities or will it allow you to set up new activities?

## Executive summary

Provide a brief summary of the research project. Emphasize the objective(s) of the project and relate them to the intended effects of the VLAIO support program: knowledge acquisition and sufficiently high-risk research. The objectives you define here will be copied verbatim to the support agreement and will be used after the research project to assess whether you were able to achieve your objectives. Please note that the funding agreement provides for best efforts, not results.

The summary must also be provided in Dutch.

The executive summary should be structured as follows:

### Layman’s summary

Provide a 150-word summary that that can be understood by the general public and that may be used for public communication.

Guidelines

* Answer these 2 questions:
  + What is the project about?
  + What is the added value of this project? What can it be used for in the future?
* Focus on the overall goal and expected impact rather than on the process itself.
* Replace difficult technical words with an easier synonym.
* Avoid (too) long sentences and complicated sentence structures, for example make two sentences out of one long sentence.
* Keep it concise, leave out what is less important for the target group.

### General objective

In a few sentences, describe the goal of the research project. What knowledge are you aiming to acquire through this research project? Describe the essence of the innovative product, process and/or service in question.

### Concrete objectives and criteria

How far along the innovation development process do you aim to be after this research project? Specify which concrete, verifiable results you wish to achieve (SMART). If possible, include quantitative targets, requirements, criteria and standards that you can use at the end of the research project to test the extent to which you managed to achieve the expected results. If your project is expected to have a social impact as well, please formulate a specific social objective too.

### Impact

Assuming that you manage to achieve the intended results, describe briefly what your company will do with these results (e.g. improve a new product, launch a new product, improve a process, ...). Describe the impact on your business (or the Flemish branch of your company): new activity, expansion/continuation of a main activity, sub-activity, ... Describe how the results will have an economic valorization and impact (jobs & investments) on Flanders. The total quantitative added value that the project will have for Flanders over the course of the valorization period has to create a leverage 10x compared to the requested funding (which is by default calculated on a valorization period of 5 years after the end of the project). If your project also creates societal added value, then describe it here shortly.

If several business partners are involved, describe the impact for each partner.

### Layman’s summary in Dutch

Hier geef je een korte samenvatting weer van je project, die ook bruikbaar is voor publicatie. Er zal steeds goedkeuring gevraagd worden alvorens iets effectief te publiceren.

Richtlijnen:

* Beantwoord deze 2 vragen:
  + Waarover gaat het project?
  + Wat is de meerwaarde van dit project? Waarvoor kan het gebruikt worden in de toekomst?
* Leg de focus op het algemeen doel en de verwachte impact eerder dan op het proces zelf.
* Vervang moeilijke technische woorden door een makkelijker synoniem.
* Vermijd (te) lange zinnen en ingewikkelde zinsconstructies, maak bijvoorbeeld twee zinnen van één lange zin.
* Hou het bondig, laat weg wat minder belangrijk is voor de doelgroep

### Algemeen doel

Beschrijf in een paar zinnen waar je naar streeft met je onderzoeksproject. Welke kennisopbouw beoog je in dit onderzoeksproject? Geef de essentie van je beoogde innovatie op niveau van product, proces en/of dienstverlening.

### Concrete doelen en criteria

Waar wil je staan met de uitwerking van je innovatie na dit onderzoeksproject? Geef concrete en toetsbare resultaten die je wil behalen (SMART). Vermeld bij voorkeur kwantitatieve streefwaarden, eisen, criteria en normen, waarmee je op het einde van het onderzoeksproject zal bepalen in welke mate de verwachte resultaten bereikt werden. Indien je met je project een maatschappelijke impact beoogt, dient hier ook een specifieke maatschappelijke doelstelling te worden opgenomen.

### Impact

Ervan uitgaande dat de beoogde resultaten gehaald worden, beschrijf bondig hoe je bedrijf de resultaten gaat exploiteren (verbetering van een bestaand product, nieuw product, verbeterd proces, …). Beschrijf de impact op je bedrijf (of indien relevant de Vlaamse vestiging): nieuwe activiteit, uitbreiding/behoud van een hoofdactiviteit/deelactiviteit, …. Beschrijf ook de economische impact (tewerkstelling en investeringen) van de resultaten op Vlaams niveau. De totaal toegevoegde waarde in de valorisatieperiode van het project dient minimaal een hefboom 10 te bedragen t.o.v. de gevraagde steun (die standaard berekend wordt op een valorisatieperiode van 5 jaar na het eind van het project). Indien je project een maatschappelijke meerwaarde creëert, gelieve dit dan ook hier kort aan te geven.

Indien verschillende bedrijfspartners betrokken zijn, beschrijf dan de impact per partner.

# Project contents

In this section, you are asked to describe your innovation and explain how the research project and your chosen approach will help you achieve the set objectives.

## 2.1 State of the art and relevance

Briefly describe the international state of the art in the domain of the research project, including sources if available (publications, patents, freedom-to-operate, existing products or processes). The state-of-the-art should be presented on the level of knowledge, insight and skills, and not only on the level of the intended application.

Explain how the research project relates to competing, complementary and previous research projects (both own projects and other R&D activities in the Flemish knowledge ecosystem), patents and standards. This should clearly highlight how the research project will expand or improve on the state of the art and the knowledge already available to the partners involved in the project. Specifically, identify challenges and problems for which no solution is currently available. Describe in this paragraph the most important knowledge gaps related to the project compared to the current state-of-the-art. The project implementation section (see below) allows you to go into more detail for each specific work package.

## 2.2 Project implementation

Your project plan will serve as the foundation for your project budget, which will be used to determine the grant amount. Use the separate [Excel-template](https://www.vlaio.be/nl/media/2847) to prepare your project budget. This file will not be shared with third-party experts.

### Approach

Describe and substantiate your proposed approach, and how it contributes to a deeper, scientifically based understanding of the underlying phenomena. Outline the general structure of the various work packages and describe how they relate to one another. Clearly specify how interim decisions will be made and how they will affect the process. Add a Gantt chart to illustrate the project schedule.

### Work Program

Divide the work program into work packages, providing the information below for each work package:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Work package number:** |  | **Starting month:** | |  | | **Duration:**  **(months)** |  | | **Total man-months:** | |  |
| **Title:** |  | | | | | | | | | | |
| Partner: | C1 | | C2 | | … | | | S1 | | S2 | |
| Man-months: |  | |  | |  | | |  | |  | |
| Subcontractor(s):  List the key subcontractors involved. For foreign companies or research institutes, please state the country in which they are based. | | | | | | | | | | | |

**Work package objective:** briefly describe the objective of this work package

**Tasks:**

* Break down the work into tasks. What possible solutions will you explore and what actions are needed to do so? Indicate the extent to which you will be using existing methods/tools/technologies/software and/or whether you will have to develop new ones.
* Indicate the staffing budget (e.g. number of planned iterations).
* Describe the division of labor between partners and key subcontractors.
* If a particular work package requires more than 10 man-months of work, specify the amount of work required for each task.

**Expected results/deliverables and milestones (if any):**

* List the expected results and milestones (if any) of this work package.

**Knowledge Step:**

* Describe the specific additional knowledge related to the state-of-the-art you will acquire while carrying out this work package.

**Challenges and risks:**

* Describe the specific challenges that apply to this work package. Describe which risks you may encounter in the context of this work package, as well as outlining a back-up plan (if necessary) or formulating go/no-go criteria.

### Staffing overview

Outline the number of man-months required per work package per year.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **WP** | **Partner** | **Start date** **+ 12 months** | **Start date** **+ 24 months** | **Start date** **+36 months** | **TOTAL** |
| 1 | Partner 1 |  |  |  |  |
| Partner 2 |  |  |  |  |
| … |  |  |  |  |
| … | Partner 1 |  |  |  |  |
| Partner 2 |  |  |  |  |
| … |  |  |  |  |
| **TOTAL** | **Partner 1** |  |  |  |  |
| **Partner 2** |  |  |  |  |
| **…** |  |  |  |  |

### Research details

Indicate **per partner** which work packages or project parts fall into the realm of industrial research and experimental development, respectively[[1]](#footnote-2).

Explain your breakdown based on the challenges and risks listed for the work packages and the extent to which you will be acquiring new knowledge, insight and skills and engaging in R&D work to obtain a deeper, scientifically based understanding of the underlying phenomena. For experimental development, explain the distinction between engineering activities, routine improvements and implementation.

## 2.3 Expertise and Resources

Briefly describe the relevant expertise and resources (staff & infrastructure) of each party involved in the tasks listed above (e.g. your company, a knowledge institute, and/or a subcontractor). If there are still certain gaps, please indicate how you plan to fill these gaps.

Outline the expected synergy or synergies between the parties and subcontractors involved and explain why you decided to work with your chosen partners.

# Additional motivation with regard to ICON

*The ICON formula is based on the concept of actual collaboration between the companies involved and the research organization(s). This translates into the elaboration of an integrated project proposal where the synergy between the different project parts and the added value of the partnership must already be clearly demonstrated. This actually existing cooperation must therefore be reflected in the description of the work plan on the one hand. On the other hand, this section requires you to provide additional motivation for the assessment of the criteria that are specific to an ICON project.*

### Collaboration between and within the research and industrial part (ICON)

Give a further description of the collaboration, more specifically the extent to which the objectives of the project are aimed at establishing a partnership and the implementation of the collaboration with attention to the contribution to a broader common goal and good mutual interaction. Please discuss both the collaboration between the research part and the industrial part as well as the collaboration between the industrial partners within the industrial part. Clarify for each partner (both companies and research organization(s)) to what level the interaction is foreseen with other partners during the project.

### Contribution to the state-of-the-art or risk higher than industrial research (ICON)

Motivate **per research organization** why your activities qualify as strategic basic research. Clearly point out for your specific activities the step w.r.t. the academic state-of-the-art and/or indicate to what extent the risk is significantly higher than usual in industrial research. Motivate this step with references into academic literature. Indicate the most important uncertainties, risks and challenges.

### Generic aspect (ICON)

Motivate **per research organization** that the application potential of your specific activities is broader than the intended exploitation of the results by the involved companies. Provide potential alternative domains, other usage scenarios and identify potential other interested companies outside the consortium of the project.

### Compliance with EU framework for state aid (ICON)

Confirm that the cooperation takes place in compliance with the EU framework for state aid, whereby the research organization(s) perform non-economic activities with sufficient independence from the involved companies, and that the companies receive no indirect support from the research organization(s). This must be clear from the agreements already made on the transfer and use of intellectual property rights. If there is a deviation from the standard market-based transfer, it must be justified that such a deviating IP scheme adequately reflects the work packages and contributions of the cooperating partners. Clearly indicate any existing relationship between the involved companies and the research organization(s) and any intent to participate in a startup. If there are links please elaborate on how it is guaranteed that the research agenda is not being under control of a specific company or a startup under construction.

# Additional Information

For the assessment of your application, VLAIO will rely primarily on the submitted application document. VLAIO will always seek the opinion of third-party experts on your application. Please make sure to complete this document clearly and accurately. VLAIO may also request extra information and/or documentation to aid the evaluation process (e.g. figures to support the valorization estimates), especially for particularly large or complex projects.

As part of the application process, you will meet with a VLAIO Advisor. During this meeting, you will discuss the information provided, such as the figures to substantiate your valorization estimates or your approach.

Afbeelding met patroon, Rechthoek, steek, plein

Door AI gegenereerde inhoud is mogelijk onjuist.

1. The distinction between industrial research and experimental development is explained in the [explanatory document](https://www.vlaio.be/nl/media/1827). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)