

IMEC.ICON MANUAL

CALL 2026-2

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1 CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVE

This manual provides an explanation of the procedures related to the projects in the scope of the imec.icon program (Interdisciplinary Collaborative Research).

imec.icon projects are interdisciplinary collaborative projects between external partners and imec.

The imec.icon procedure has been highly tailored to the industrial R&D project procedures from Agentschap Innoveren & Ondernemen (VLAIO), to allow external partners based in the Flanders or the Brussels Capital region to apply for respectively VLAIO funding[1] or Innoviris funding, embedded in the imec.icon application. The decision-making procedure is the joint responsibility of VLAIO, Innoviris and imec. Hereinafter VLAIO and Innoviris will be referred to as regional funding agencies.

imec.icon projects have to comply with imec's mission, which is to generate an economic and social added value through excellent research and the creation of human capital within the nanoelectronics and digital technology.

To accomplish this mission, imec wants to:

- carry out interdisciplinary demand-driven research in an open-innovation context;
- generate an added value through close collaboration with economic and social players in Flanders and in the whole world;
- support researchers and companies in becoming world players.

One of imec's major instruments in achieving this goal is imec.icon: by carrying out multidisciplinary research, imec wants to contribute to overall solutions, combining multiple domains, including not only technological research, but also legal and societal aspects.

[1] With support from the Fonds voor Innoveren en Ondernemen (formerly known as Hermesfonds). VLAIO fulfills the operational tasks in name of and on behalf of the Fonds voor Innoveren en Ondernemen.

2 CHARACTERISTICS OF IMEC.ICON PROJECTS

The main characteristics of imec.icon projects are the following:

- demand-driven Research & Development;
- within the scope of the imec market segments;
- collaborative and interdisciplinary consortium;
- well-balanced composition of the consortium;
- generating economic added value, and possibly also cultural and/or societal added value;
- delivering demonstrators;
- standard duration of 2 years, and up to 3 years with motivated request;
- the joint contribution of the subsidized external partners in the project must be larger than the joint contribution of the research partners.

Each of these characteristics is clarified below.

2.1 DEMAND-DRIVEN R&D

Interdisciplinary Collaborative Research is based on demand from the (Flemish) industrial, social or cultural sector or public authorities. Project proposals are realized bottom-up from the perspective of users and/or stakeholders and executors.

2.2 WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE IMEC MARKET SEGMENTS

The imec.icon projects should be situated in one of imec's market segments:

- Smart Infotainment
- Smart Health
- Smart Energy
- Smart Cities
- Smart Mobility
- Smart Industries
- Smart Education
- Smart Agrofood

A description of these market segments can be found on the imec website.

2.3 THE CONSORTIUM

Projects should always be submitted by a consortium in which several partners may participate. There is no restriction with respect to organizational structures, i.e., the public sector, non-profit

organizations, SMEs, as well as large companies and local branches of multinationals can participate together with the Research groups [2].

Partners who wish to apply within their imec.icon project proposal for funding with one of the regional funding agencies should also comply with the guidelines for funding. All companies, from SMEs to small non-profit organizations or the Flemish or Brussels branch of a multinational company, can submit an R&D project funding application on the condition that they are a legal entity from the time the funding agreement is signed. Applicants must also have significant valorization prospects for the results in (although not exclusively) Flanders -for funding from VLAIO- and in the Brussels Capital Region -for Innoviris funding.

2.3.1 COLLABORATIVE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY CONSORTIUM

The consortium should have a collaborative and interdisciplinary composition. This implies that a (sufficient) number of companies or cultural or social institutions take an active part in the project, together with imec research groups and preferably also with potential clients and users. Furthermore, there should be a mix of large and small enterprises and, preferably, at least one SME should participate. In order to maximize the quality and the usability of the research results, the project should aim at an interdisciplinary collaboration and approach. The participation of representative actors within the value chain of the project as well as multiple complementary research groups with different competences guarantees the interdisciplinary nature of the project.

2.3.2 WELL-BALANCED COMPOSITION OF THE CONSORTIUM

The composition of the consortium is based on the complementary roles of the partners in the research project, i.e., a supplier of technological solutions, a group of customers or users, a company providing services etc. The consortium should be composed in a balanced way with each partner providing added value to the success of the project. Each partner's contribution should be relevant and in proportion to the size and capacity of the company.

2.3.3 ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Establishing an advisory committee is mandatory.
The purpose of the advisory committee is to support the valorization strategy of the research partners of the project. The advisory committee may, of course, be expanded from other perspectives. Interaction with the advisory committee will be embedded in the work plan and the dissemination and valorization strategy.

The advisory committee serves as a sounding board. The ultimate responsibility for guiding the implementation of the research component remains with the conducting research organization(s).

[2] Meaning of Research groups is: all research groups within imec, the Flemish universities or the Flemish research organizations (where their research, like that of all participating research groups, qualifies as generic (i.e. more broadly applicable than the specific case of a project) and beyond the state-of-the-art (new and risky)), and who request imec funding.

Companies wishing to participate in the advisory committee of an imec.icon project must substantiate their commitment with a declaration of intent. These declarations must be submitted with the project proposal. A financial contribution is not required for participation in the advisory committee.
It is important that the declarations are substantiated and not limited to a non-binding general expression of interest. They should indicate the specific added value of the expected research results for the company in question and the potential further development and implementation pathways. The declaration of intent for membership in the advisory committee must be signed by a legally authorized representative of the company. This confirms the internal support within the company for the involvement in the advisory committee.
There is no preset size of the advisory committee, it is suggested to have at least two representative and well-selected companies for each research group, covering the principal research topics.
The composition of the advisory committee should ideally be as complete as possible at the time of the project submission (including substantiated declarations of intent).
In an advisory committee, members do not automatically have rights to exploit the results.

2.3.4 USER GROUP

The consortium is recommended to set up a user group if this is useful to the progress of the project. The user group is a counselling committee with representatives of (a) relevant economic and/or societal target group(s). Their task is to give advice concerning the progress of the imec.icon project and the valorization possibilities of the developed Foreground[3]. A user group can be especially relevant in light of the broad dissemination of the research results (i.e., the results of the research groups). A user group is not a project partner and hence cannot apply for funding from VLAIO or from Innoviris within the imec.icon project nor can they claim any rights on the developed Intellectual Property (IP).

2.4 ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND/OR SOCIAL ADDED VALUE

The projects must generate an economic added value, and possibly also a cultural and/or social added value. This means that 'non-for-profit' partners are also eligible to participate on the condition that the economic added value generated by all the consortium partners is sufficiently large. For example, social added value can be found in the cultural, healthcare or public sector, etc.

2.5 DELIVERING DEMONSTRATORS

Apart from research results, "demonstrators" should be delivered at the end of a project. By preference, this is done at one or more end-users or customers in the market segment of the research project. A demonstrator is not a solution pilot ready for commercialization but should be a "proof-of-concept" test set-up, allowing demonstration of the research results in a setting that is as realistic as feasible.

[3] Foreground relates to all results being generated in the scope of an ICON project, including information, whether or not these can be protected.

2.6 FORMAL CHARACTERISTICS

2.6.1 DURATION OF 2 TO 3 YEARS

imec.icon projects have a duration of 2 to 3 years. The standard duration is 2 years. A duration of up to 3 years can be requested with a motivation explaining why a 2-year duration is insufficient to realize the project's innovation goals. The imec.icon program manager can approve the motivated request. During the project execution, an extension of the project up to a maximum of 1 year can be requested when necessary for the execution of the project. The motivated request needs to be approved by the imec.icon program manager and the applicable funding agencies. Note that a project extension will not lead to an increase in public funding.

2.6.2 MINIMUM CONTRIBUTION OF 50 % BY THE EXTERNAL PARTNERS

The joint contribution of the external partners with public funding[4] in the project should be more than the joint contribution of the research partners[5]. over the total duration and realization of the project. Imec will only finance the imec research share in the project.

2.6.3 THE RESEARCH LEADER IS AN IMEC RESEARCH GROUP LEADER

The research leader is either an imec research group leader or a person assigned within his/her own research group. The research leader is the first point of contact from the Research group and will coordinate and lead the research activities.

2.6.4 BALANCED INDUSTRY CONSORTIUM

Every external partner's contribution shall be smaller than 70% of the total contribution of the external partners.

3 SELECTION AND EVALUATION PROCEDURE

[4] From Agentschap Innoveren en Ondernemen, Innoviris or any other funding agency
[5] When calculating the balance, strategic research centers Flanders Make, VIB and VITO are part of the research contribution

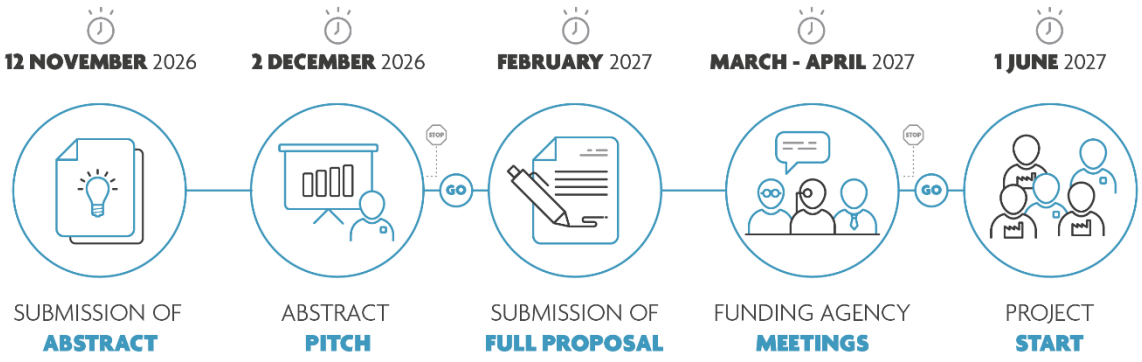


Figure 1: Overview of the 2 phases of the submission procedure: extended abstract and full proposal

3.1 SUBMISSION AND EVALUATION OF THE EXTENDED ABSTRACT

3.1.1 SUBMITTING THE EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The extended abstract must be submitted on time in order to be eligible for the submission of a full proposal. The extended abstract must elaborate following items:

- Project idea and innovation objectives, what are the cause and the context of the project?
- An explanation concerning the expected social and economic added value of the project.
- The consortium: which **external partners and Research group(s)** are involved? A minimum of 2 research groups, of which at least 1 imec research group, is required. For the external partners, a distinction must be made between key partners and other partners. Key partners are essential to the project in such extent that the full proposal will only be eligible when all key partners mentioned in the extended abstract are also included in the full proposal. In the period between the submission of the extended abstract and the full proposal, new key partners can join, but applicants must consider that the collaborative nature of the consortium will be an important criterion for the evaluation of the abstracts. Other external partners also enter into an agreement, but if they withdraw their commitment, this goes without a penalty.
- The names of the project leader and the research group leader must be mentioned.
- In the abstract **each partner** must clearly demonstrate the added value of his contribution to the project as well as the importance of the project for the partner. The Research groups will also motivate the importance of the project for their strategy.
- Each partner will indicate the expected workload for the project as well as the most important milestones / deliverables.

The extended abstract must be in English and has to be submitted via the MyProjects platform. More detailed instructions can be found in the Abstract template. You can download[6] the template via the imec website.

In the following situations, extra documents must be handed in:

- The extended abstract has already been submitted[7] in a previous imec.icon call, requiring a side letter resubmission, see also section 3.3.2 (resubmission letter). Extended abstracts can be resubmitted only once.
- A Research group requesting imec funding participates for the first time in an imec.icon call, requiring a motivation letter.

Partner information that was provided in the abstract will be shared with VLAIO and Innoviris to ensure a smooth evaluation.

For more info on these extra documents, please consult the Abstract template on the imec website.

3.1.2 ELIGIBILITY OF THE EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The extended abstracts have to comply with the formal criteria for eligibility, which will be verified by imec. Only projects with a positive score on every criterion will be eligible for further selection and evaluation.

The abstract was submitted using the provided templates
The proposal was submitted on time
The prescribed character limit is complied with
There is a minimum of 2 Research groups of which 1 imec research group
There is a minimum of 3 independent industry partners, of which at least 2 Flemish industry partners that intend to request VLAIO funding
The 50/50 rule is complied with (see section 4.1)

3.1.3 ANSWERS TO EXPERTS' QUESTIONS ("REBUTTAL")

The consortium will receive a feedback document with questions from the expert Panel. The members of the imec Panel will be representatives of imec as well as external experts, appointed by imec. The consortium will then get a few days to formulate their rebuttal and submit it via MyProjects, as part of their pitch presentation.

[6] The template is available from start of the call until the abstract deadline
[7] A project can only be resubmitted once, unless the project idea is completely rewritten. This will be judged by the imec.icon program manager during a sparring session for submission.

3.1.4 SHORT PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT IDEA TO A PANEL ("PITCH")

The consortium will give a short presentation based on the extended abstract to an imec Panel. The most relevant partners of the consortium need to be present, with a maximum of 5 people. There will be a short presentation (typically 15 minutes[8]), followed by a Q&A (typically 12 minutes). The Panel will then deliberate behind closed doors. The Panel members will not be giving personal/direct feedback to the project submitters afterwards.
Each project is scored on these aspects:

- Assessment of clearly defined and realistic research objectives;
- To what extent is the project proposal in line with imec's vision, mission and strategy?
- Assessment of the proposed (economic, and possibly social) valorization of the project
- Assessment of the composition of the consortium, taking into account the participation of core partners, other partners and Research groups.

***** In exceptional cases, the imec.icon program management can decide to organize the pitches online.***

3.1.5 DECISION OF ABSTRACT PANEL

The jury of the abstract Panel will decide on every abstract. This decision can be:

- **Admission to submit a full proposal**
  The Panel decides that the project answers to an existing need. Furthermore, the quality of the abstract and the consortium justify investing in a full proposal. This decision however holds no guarantee that the project will in fact receive support. In the Full Proposal phase, the funding agencies and imec will decide on the proposal.
- **No admission to submit a full proposal**
  The Panel decides that the demand-driven aspect of the project is not demonstrated adequately. Alternatively, they can decide that the initial quality of the proposal or the consortium is insufficient to justify investing in a full proposal. The consortium will therefore not be admitted to submit a full proposal during the current call.

Communicating the decision of the Panel

Each consortium will receive the motivated decision (feedback form) of the Panel by email.

Upon request, a feedback meeting with imec is possible.

Reservations of research funding

imec will reserve the necessary funds to finance the research groups in the proposal for up to 18 months (i.e., within 18 months after the abstract decision, the proposal should be decided on by the funding

[8] The concrete timings for the pitch (including the timings for the presentation and the Q&A) are communicated to the consortia of submitted abstracts prior to the specific pitch session.

agencies and imec). The period of 18 months should be sufficient for an initial full proposal submission and evaluation, and a resubmission in case the initial submission was not successful.

imec requires consortia to submit their (initial) full proposal at the latest 6 months after the abstract decision. Any extension of the mentioned time horizons (18 months resp. 6 months) needs the explicit approval of the imec.icon program manager.

3.2 SUBMISSION AND EVALUATION OF THE FULL PROPOSAL

Only projects for which an extended abstract was submitted and that received a positive decision of the Panel are allowed to submit a full proposal. All other proposals are inadmissible. Section 7.3 gives an overview of the full proposal submission procedure.

After a rejection or withdrawal of an initial full proposal submission, the consortium can resubmit their proposal once after a resubmission meeting with the imec.icon program manager. In case a full proposal resubmission is allowed, a full proposal resubmission document needs be submitted detailing the planned improvements and changes to the full proposal compared to the initial submission. This resubmission document also contains the necessary information for the pre-application with the funding agencies.

3.2.1 FULL PROPOSAL - ELIGIBILITY

Firstly, it will be verified whether the projects meet the formal requirements for eligibility. Special attention will be paid to the fact whether the alterations in the project between abstract and full proposal are allowed. Only the projects that meet this requirement will be evaluated.

Pre-application step

Part of the check on the eligibility of the proposal and of the funding for the industry partners will be performed by imec and VLAIO/Innoviris before the full proposal submission in the Pre-application step. Most required information is requested in the extended abstract document. Imec and/or VLAIO/Innoviris will request additional information if necessary for the eligibility check.

Evaluation of formal eligibility by imec

The eligibility of the proposals will be verified by imec. This evaluation will be carried out by the imec.icon administration and management. Only projects with a positive score on every criterion will be eligible for further selection and evaluation.

An eligible extended abstract was submitted
The consortium was given admission to submit a full proposal
A valid Letter of Intent, or steps that serve as Letter of Intent (in VLAIO KRIS), for each partner was submitted
The file contains enough information to start the scientific evaluation

The file contains enough information to assess the valorization potential (general information + more detailed info for partners requesting funding)
The proposal was submitted on time, i.e., on one of the possible dates communicated by imec.icon in the full proposal information session, within 6 months after the abstract decision (in case of an initial full proposal submission) and within 18 months after the abstract decision (in case of a full proposal resubmission)
The 50/50 rule is complied with (see section 4.1)
The research leader is an imec research group leader or someone appointed within his/her group
The prescribed maximum number of characters is complied with

Possible alterations in the Full proposal in relation to the abstract

The project idea, including the project context and the innovation objectives cannot be altered in the full proposal in comparison to the abstract. Refinements and a more detailed explanation are allowed.

The valorization path needs to remain the same in essence, the business case can however be refined.

The proposed key partners within the consortium must remain, other (non-key) partners may opt out, be replaced or be added.

New partners – both key and non-key – are allowed to enter the project in the phase between abstract and full proposal, under the condition that the scope, objectives and valorization paths are not significantly impacted.

The full proposal takes into account the advice and the directives that the imec management board sends to the consortium along with the admission to submit a full proposal.

The budget of the Research groups in the full proposal must be in line with the budgets (represented by person-months) specified in the abstract.

The final assessment on whether the proposal meets all the requested formal criteria is an unambiguous YES or NO.

Early start of the project by imec

For reasons of effective collaboration, it is important for the project members to aim for a synchronization of the start date.

If a partner is considering starting early, this must be discussed with the imec.icon program manager. This is the primary contact person between imec and the consortium.

The target start date of the imec.icon project is June 1st 2026. External partners may start earlier at their own risk (at the earliest the first day of the month following the submission of an eligible project at VLAIO, i.e. March 1st 2026 for submissions in February 2026). This is a project start 'at own risk'. 'At own risk' means that in case the project is not approved, partners can't reclaim the costs within the scope of financial support. Research groups cannot start early with the project.

Eligibility of the regional funding agencies

The regional funding agencies decide on the eligibility for funding applications and will communicate their decision to the project leader. In order to expedite this process, the pre-application step is introduced. Based on the available information in the submitted abstract, the regional funding agencies will perform an eligibility check for the partners requesting funding. If required for their analysis, the funding agencies might request additional information from the partners.

3.2.2 FULL PROPOSAL - EVALUATION

The funding agency will plan a clarification meeting after your project submission. In this meeting, the funding agency advisor will provide additional feedback and input to the consortium in order to highlight strengths and weaknesses in the proposal. In case confidential information for a given partner is concerned, an extension to the clarification meeting between this partner and the VLAIO / Innoviris advisor can be held separately.
Based on this feedback, the consortium will have 12 working days to adapt the proposal to answer to the raised concerns, and will have the opportunity to file a revised proposal in MyProjects.

The full proposal will be evaluated by independent experts. There is one panel of experts per full proposal, appointed by VLAIO. The consortium will receive a report with the most important comments and questions from the experts. The consortium can answer or rebut these remarks in a written rebuttal, submitted via MyProjects. Afterwards, the experts will discuss and provide their assessment of the project proposal, based on the Full Proposal and the rebuttal documents.

The evaluation criteria are (as listed in https://www.vlaio.be/nl/media/668):

- Quality
    - Innovation goal: clarity and realism of the innovation goal
    - Leap of knowledge and challenges
    - Relevance and quality of the project approach to achieve the innovation goal
    - Expertise and resources
    - Budget
- Impact
    - Strategic importance of the project for the industrial partners
    - SWOT: external opportunities and threats for the industrial partners
    - SWOT: internal strengths and weaknesses of the industrial partners
    - Leverage for the funding region(s)
    - Societal impact
    - Anchoring in the funding region(s)

    - Valorization track record in Flanders
- ICON specific criteria
    - Cooperation, contribution to SotA or high risk of research, broad applicability of results
- Additionality

These evaluation criteria are aligned with those of the public funding authorities' R&D projects.

The experts' assessment will be included in the decision document.

There will also be an (online) meeting with the funding agencies and the consortium to discuss the project proposal and any questions or remarks the funding agencies might have. The consortium will have the opportunity to deliver a written rebuttal to these questions and remarks.

Evaluation
Each project will be judged as a whole, taking into account possible amendments provided during the evaluation process (e.g., the rebuttal documents).

A positive advice may also contain additional specific conditions that have to be fulfilled at the start or during the project. These conditions can either be organizational, financial or with respect to content.

Final Approval/Decision
Based on all available information, including the recommendations of the external experts, a report will be drawn up, containing the information on the project (with emphasis on the innovation purpose), the evaluation and a budget proposal. For those projects requesting funding, the valorization potential will also be evaluated extensively. Concerning possible funding from VLAIO, these projects will be assessed according to the regular selection mechanism for company R&D funding. Depending on their scores, projects will be classified in different priority categories. The Fonds voor Innoveren en Ondernemen and Innoviris' Boards of Directors will decide whether or not to grant respectively VLAIO or Innoviris funding and will advise imec on whether or not to grant funding.

Subsequently the decisions of the Boards of Directors will be communicated to the imec Executive Board, which will then decide on possible imec funding.

The recommendation of the regional funding agencies on imec.icon evaluations is binding as far as the quality classification goes, and the imec Executive Board will respect these classifications (as well as the recommended ranking when given) when making its selection, in agreement with imec's budgetary limits and R&D portfolio.

Relation imec.icon – R&D Application
The evaluation of the imec.icon application is an evaluation of the complete proposal and is the responsibility of imec. If there is a funding application with a regional funding agency embedded in the imec.icon file, that funding application is the sole responsibility of that regional funding agency. The general regulatory process for that regional funding agency's R&D projects will therefore be applicable in full on this segment.

However, it should be noted that participation in an imec.icon project by an external partner should not depend on whether or not that partner will receive funding, as this would jeopardize the efforts of the consortium as a whole.

If the application for funding receives a positive evaluation, the funding can only be allocated definitely when the imec.icon project has been approved by the imec Executive Board (and will be executed).

3.3 CONFIDENTIALITY, RESUBMISSION, RECONSIDERATION, COMPLAINT

3.3.1 CONFIDENTIALITY

All staff members of imec and the involved researchers, the regional funding agencies, external experts and members of the Board of Directors of VLAIO, Innoviris and imec are bound to keep all information made available to them confidential and will not provide any of that information to third parties or use it for their own benefit. In case of a conflict of interest during the evaluation by a member of the panel, this panel member will refrain from reading and evaluating the proposal.

3.3.2 RESUBMISSION

In case of a rejected abstract or full proposal, a reworked project idea can be submitted in a next call, on the condition of a resubmission meeting and an approved resubmission letter. A resubmission letter contains a description of the most important changes between this submission and the previous one (what shall be added/deleted/clarified w.r.t. the previous project idea).

Rejected abstracts can be resubmitted once in a next call. Rejected full proposals can also be resubmitted once, either as a resubmitted abstract in a next call, or as a resubmitted full proposal. During the resubmission meeting the most appropriate resubmission path will be decided on, typically depending on the differences between the resubmitted proposal and the original proposal on aspects such as the consortium partners, the research goals, the valorization paths, etc. In case of substantial changes, rejected full proposals must be resubmitted in the abstract phase. Additionally, if a decision on a resubmitted full proposal cannot be reasonably expected within the remaining period of 18 months after the abstract decision, the resubmitted proposal must be resubmitted in the abstract phase.

For resubmitted abstracts, the resubmission letter has to be submitted to the imec.icon program manager before the resubmission meeting, and needs to be uploaded afterwards on the MyProjects platform (same deadline as abstract submission). For more details see the abstract template.

If an imec.icon proposal is rejected, external partners who had requested funding through the imec.icon project are free to apply for funding with the regional funding agencies for a regular industrial project that is not linked to an imec.icon project.

3.3.3 RECONSIDERATION

As for the abstract, there can be no requests for reconsideration.

As for the full proposal: via the imec.icon program manager the consortium can request to reconsider an application that has been rejected by the imec Executive Board, in which case the Executive Board will decide on the reconsideration during the next imec.icon call.

This request for reconsideration has to be submitted within 30 working days following the Board's decision and must be based on clear and verifiable elements. These can be elements that, according to the applicants, were not appraised in a correct manner, or relevant additional information that did not reach imec/the regional funding agencies in time, or important adjustments in response to the comments. The new elements have to be significant enough to reconsider the decision. The imec Executive Board will report on the status of the reconsideration within 75 working days following receipt of the request for reconsideration. This period will be extended by an additional 30 working days if new external experts have to be consulted. The results of a possible reconsideration can only be implemented within the framework of a next imec.icon call.

The innovation goal cannot be changed in a request for reconsideration. If the innovation goal has been altered thoroughly, a new application can be submitted (at a next abstract deadline) which will be subject to the same terms and conditions, including the terms with respect to the start date and the period for justification of costs.

3.3.4 COMPLAINT

In case applicants are dissatisfied with the way their application was handled, the consortium can submit a written or electronic complaint via the proposal manager. Complaints will be dealt with within 45 days following receipt.

4 FINANCING MODEL

4.1 MINIMUM CONTRIBUTION OF 50% OF THE TOTAL PROJECT COST BY THE EXTERNAL PARTNERS

The joint contribution by the external partners with funding in the project must be more than the joint contribution of the research partners for the total duration and implementation of the project[9].

Only the Research groups in the project will be funded by imec.

4.2 THE COST MODEL

Approved project costs consist of personnel expenses (personnel expenses and PhD grants for research institutions) on the one hand and operational costs on the other hand.

For the external partners, the cost model of the applicable regional funding agency applies in full.

VLAIO: July 2026 – https://www.vlaio.be/nl/media/3071
Innoviris: https://innoviris.brussels/nl/program/rd-projects

4.3 SUBCONTRACTING

Subcontractor costs can be accepted as direct costs in the project[10], but research activities can never be subcontracted, either in part or in full, without the prior written consent from imec.

This consent is not necessary for a.o. routine tasks that are not part of the core components of the project and that are not taken on directly by one of the partners (i.e. routine testing, development of part of a prototype, part of the programming, etc.). For more information, please contact an Innovation Manager.

For non-routine tasks, please contact your Innovation Manager.

Subcontracting between project partners is not permitted.

Companies can only operate as subcontractors in a project when they are not participating at their own risks, when they have no valorization rationale and when they don't acquire intellectual property rights in the context of the execution of their tasks in the project.

[9] When calculating the balance, strategic research centers Flanders Make, VIB and VITO are part of the research contribution
[10] Subject to the rules of the cost model of the funding agency

Company directors acting under their own management company must be considered as subcontractors, and need to be budgeted under the same conditions.

5 AGREEMENTS CONCERNING COOPERATION

5.1 THE IMEC.ICON COLLABORATION AGREEMENT (CA)

The imec.icon Collaboration Agreement covers all practical rules concerning collaboration, financing, confidentiality, IPR rules, reporting and some other rights and obligations between the partners in the consortium. Moreover, the Collaboration Agreement is an essential condition for activating the Funding Agreement of the regional funding agency (see below). At the same time, the partners in the consortium commit themselves to their intended efforts by means of the Letter of Intent, regardless of whether the regional funding agency will grant funding.

In the imec.icon Collaboration Agreement, the intellectual property rights (Article 8) are defined in such a way that they are in line with the ICON decree and the "Handbook of Responsible Partnering" from the European Commission. In general, the IPR arrangement can be outlined as follows:

Principles of ownership

- Background or Sideground = ownership of contributing party
- Foreground from own work = ownership of generating party
- Foreground from work of one or more knowledge institutions = ownership knowledge institution(s) + co-ownership imec
- Foreground of which the contribution of the related project partners cannot or cannot properly be separated = co-ownership by the related project partners

Principles of co-ownership

- Every co-owner owns the non-exclusive right to exploit co-ownership and grant non-exclusive licenses to third parties without consent from or compensation to other co-owners ("without accountancy")
- Protection (e.g., Patents) is arranged in consultation
- Damage claim for breaches is arranged in consultation

Access rights

- Listing Background/Sideground through positive list
- Criterion = "needed for valorization of the own foreground"
- Granted after written motivated request unless granted through an agreement - Non-exclusive and worldwide
- No transfer costs

- Rights expire 2 years after termination of the project
- Negotiation on conditions should be in writing and within 2 years following termination of the project. Patent application can extend this term to a maximum of 6 months after publication of the search report

Schematic representation of ownership and access rights

Ownership	Each partner is and remains sole owner of own Background, Sideground and Foreground. Co-ownership between all parties that contributed only when the contribution to the Foreground cannot or cannot properly be separated.	
Access rights necessary for project execution	Background/Sideground/Foreground: free of charge	
	Same work package	**Different work package**
Access rights when necessary for exploitation/use of own Foreground	Back & Sideground: market conditions Foreground: Free of charge (after extensive collaboration)	Back & Sideground: market conditions Foreground: Favorable

The Collaboration Agreement includes specific agreements on:

- Access rights to Software
- Access rights to Object code and/or API
- Access rights to Source code
- Open Source Software policy
- Admission of Party after start of project
- Excluded or withdrawn Party
- Rights of related entities of a Party

The signing of the imec.icon Collaboration Agreement within 4 months following the start of the project is a condition for the acceptance of project costs of the imec.icon project by both imec and regional funding agencies.

5.2 THE FUNDING AGREEMENT

5.2.1 FUNDING AGREEMENT FROM VLAIO

The VLAIO Funding Agreement is not a separate document anymore, but is replaced by a combination of the Letter of Declaration and the Decision Document.

Letter of Declaration: while submitting the full proposal, a declaration of intent is expected from every partner. For partners requesting VLAIO funding, this will be the Letter of Declaration, signed in the VLAIO KRIS platform. In addition to a letter of intent, in this Letter of Declaration the partner also agrees to the general and project-specific conditions of VLAIO:

- Innovation Aid General Terms and Conditions - version 2025.1 https://www.vlaio.be/nl/media/2845
- Explanatory document: Implementation and monitoring of development and research projects – July 2025: https://www.vlaio.be/nl/media/1827
- ICON explanatory document – January 2026: https://www.vlaio.be/nl/media/2397 (in Dutch only)

The Decision Document: The decision by the Fonds voor Innoveren en Ondernemen (Hermes Committee) is communicated in the decision file that, when approved, will be sent to each VLAIO funded partner. In this decision document, the following things will be communicated:

- Funding assigned to the partner within the project
- Overview of the periods in which funding instalments will be paid out
- Special conditions the partner needs to meet in order to be able to receive funding instalments

By being present at the kick-off meeting of the project and not objecting to the start of the project, the partner agrees to the conditions mentioned in the Decision Document.

It is recommended that the project leader in the imec.icon project is also the lead partner in the VLAIO Funding Agreement in order to ensure an optimal flow of information and reporting.

The imec.icon Collaboration Agreement is a condition sine qua non for the VLAIO Funding Agreement and shall be signed by the partners in the consortium within 4 months following the project start.

5.2.2 INNOVIRIS FUNDING AGREEMENT

An Innoviris funding agreement is signed between the Innoviris funding recipient partner and Innoviris. Innoviris will handle this procedure and imec will not intervene here.

The imec.icon Collaboration Agreement is a condition sine qua non for the Innoviris Funding Agreement and shall be signed by the partners in the consortium within 4 months following the signing of the funding agreement.

6 REPORTING

6.1 IMEC.ICON STATUS REPORT – PROGRESS REPORT

The imec.icon status reports describe the progress of the project. The project leader submits the reports to imec on a 6-monthly basis by using the MyProjects platform. imec will pass on the report to the regional funding agencies where they will regard this as a progress report in case of funding.

Within the scope of granted regional funding, the regional funding agency may implement supplementary conditions concerning reporting. These conditions will be stipulated in the Decision Document of the regional funding agency.

Status reports – Terms:

- On project level
- At least once every 6 months
- Using MyProjects
- By the project leader
- imec will forward to the regional funding agency (if necessary)

6.2 STEERING GROUP MINUTES

The project steering group will meet at least once every six months. The project leader will submit the minutes of this meeting to imec via MyProjects.

Steering Group Minutes – Terms: -
On project level

- At least once every 6 months
- By the project leader
- Using MyProjects
- imec will not forward to the regional funding agency

6.3 YEARLY FINANCIAL REPORTS

All partners must submit financial reporting and effort tracking.

The effort tracking for industry partners contains a detailed breakdown of used resources and people and is expected per project year. Within two months after the project end, each industry partner must submit their financial report for the whole project using the MyProjects platform.

The Research groups will receive an Excel document provided by imec for their reporting and will add the supporting documents to substantiate any claim. Only actual costs in accordance with the cost model are eligible.

6.4 END REPORT

The end report must be submitted to imec via MyProjects within 2 months following the end of the project.

This end report contains collective and individual reporting:

- a collective narrative (content) report;
- individual valorization reports, both for Research groups and partners.
  Partners receiving VLAIO funding have the possibility to submit this part directly to VLAIO if it contains confidential information that cannot be shared with other partners.

Overview of the sections of the final report:

	Content	What
Final report	Section I Collective report	1 doc/project
	Section II Individual valorization report for Companies	1 doc/partner
	Section III Individual valorization report for Research groups	1 doc/research group

The final report needs to be submitted via MyProjects.

As regards the financial reporting, the Research groups and the partners have to make sure they have delivered all yearly financial reports to imec (see section 6.3). VLAIO supported companies need to submit some parts of their reporting via the VLAIO KRIS platform. imec and/or VLAIO will instruct the companies on when and how this reporting needs to be submitted via KRIS.

The end report is only admissible after all parts have been handed in.

Up to 2 years after the project has ended the final report can be adjusted (e.g., to get access rights to Foreground or Background from other partners (under the IP conditions in the collaboration agreement)); 2 years and 2 months after the end of the project, it will be closed.

6.5 OVERVIEW OF REPORTING

	Status report	Steering committee minutes	Yearly financial report	Final report
What	Report regarding content	Meeting reports of Steerco	Financial and PM report – one report per partner	Report regarding content
When	Min. every 6 months	Min. every 6 months	Each year + no later than 2 months after project end	No later than 2 months after project end

How	MyProjects	MyProjects	Research groups: Excel; Others: MyProjects	MyProjects
Submitted by	Project lead – one report per project	Project lead – one report per project	Financial responsible of the partner	1 collective report + 1 report per partner
The regional funding agency	imec transfers to the regional funding agency	No transfer to the regional funding agency	imec transfers to the regional funding agency for companies with R&D funding	imec transfers to the regional funding agency

7 PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION

7.1 DEVELOPING AN IMEC.ICON IDEA

If you have a project idea, the best thing to do is to contact imec (icon@imec.be). They will give you more information on the imec.icon program and they will refer you to the relevant collaborators within the Research groups. In case of specific questions on the application for funding, preliminary discussions with the regional funding agency can be organized.

7.2 SUBMITTING AN EXTENDED ABSTRACT

An extended abstract consists of multiple elements (see table in the abstract template). Some of the information needs to be submitted directly in the MyProjects platform, other information needs to be uploaded on the MyProjects platform in the form of a .doc or .pdf document. The proposal must be submitted in English because of the international referees.

7.3 SUBMITTING A FULL PROPOSAL

The proposal must be submitted in English because of the international referees.

The following parts have to be translated into Dutch as well:

- The title
- The management summary
- The innovation goals

An imec.icon proposal must be submitted by a consortium of companies and institutions, the proposal manager/submission coordinator will be responsible for the consistency of the application file. The imec.icon proposal must be submitted using the MyProjects platform. Partners requesting VLAIO funding will also receive a link to VLAIO's submission platform named KRIS. There, they will need to update the information for their company. Once all VLAIO funded partners have done this, imec will do the final submission in KRIS.

imec.icon proposals including an application for partial funding by individual external partners must be submitted to imec. However, imec will not serve as intermediary for VLAIO R&D funding applications that are not linked to an imec imec.icon proposal. These latter types of applications should be addressed to the regional funding agencies directly.

As imec is responsible for the eligibility assessment of the proposals, all **components should be submitted to imec**. This implies that failure by one of the partners to submit a document can lead to imec blocking the complete file.

The imec.icon proposal consists of a number of sections. The table below lists who should complete which sections and how it should be submitted. The proposal will only be eligible once all required sections have been submitted.

Next to the general part, which is being submitted by the proposal manager, the proposal also contains a number of sections that have to be submitted by the individual partners directly. It is therefore crucial that the naming of the files be consistent.

The following guidelines should be observed (note: subject to change in this call; please consult the full proposal info session presentation).

	Documents	Content	to experts
1 per project	Document A	Information on the whole imec.icon project and its valorization	✓
	Document B	Partner general background information	
1 per partner	Document C	Additional/confidential valorization information for the industry partners	
1 per partner with VLAIO funding	"Bepaling grootte onderneming"	Additional financial information on the industry partners with VLAIO funding	
1 per partner with previous VLAIO funding	Valorization track record	On request from VLAIO: companies need to provide input on their valorization track	✗
1 per partner with VLAIO or Innoviris funding	Budget details	Excel template for VLAIO or Innoviris	

7.4 LETTER OF INTENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

When submitting an extended abstract, no letter of intent is needed.

During the full proposal, all partners need to sign a declaration in the VLAIO KRIS platform. This declaration effectively replaces the separate LoI document which was used during previous calls. This means that we no longer require an LoI to be signed and uploaded to MyProjects.

Preceding the signing of this declaration, the partners can protect the preparatory proposal discussions by signing an NDA. For this purpose, you can use an imec-template NDA that you can request at icon@imec.be.

8 QUESTIONS

If you have any further questions about the imec.icon processes or about this manual, please contact imec (icon@imec.be). For questions regarding the ICON funding program at the public funding authorities, contact Innoviris (smaas@innoviris.irisnet.be) or VLAIO (marc.tiri@vlaio.be).