OVERVIEW

The SME voucher scheme is an initiative by the University of Liverpool Technology Directorate designed to build collaborations with the local business community. It provides local businesses with access to the analytical equipment and expertise within the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences managed by the Technology Directorate. The scheme specifically seeks to pump-prime small, early stage research projects that address a significant objective or barrier for the business. Awards made under this scheme can only be used to offset access fees to Technology Directorate Shared Research Facilities and applications that do not contain a significant research element will not be considered.

BEFORE YOU APPLY

You must discuss your proposal with the academic leader of the facility you wish to use before submitting your application. They will give invaluable advice about the feasibility of your project, the best experimental approach and crucially, how much it’s likely to cost. Contact details of the facility academic leads can be obtained from Duncan Robertson (dhlr@liverpool.ac.uk, Tel: 0151 794 5473) and Ben Mollitt (Ben.Mollitt@liverpool.ac.uk, Tel: 0151, 795 8147), who will also arrange an introduction. We won’t consider any applications where prior contact hasn’t been made with the SRF academic leader and you should allow at least five days for assessment of your application.

PARTICIPATING FACILITIES

The following facilities are participating in the scheme:

- Centre for Proteome Research
- Centre for Cell Imaging
- Computational Biology Facility
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging Centre
- Cell Sorting and Isolation Facility
- NMR Metabolomics Facility

All facilities are experienced service providers for a large University faculty. They have state of the art equipment and are led by highly experienced members of academic staff. To find out more about the capability of the participating facilities visit: https://www.liv.ac.uk/technology-directorate.
ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for a voucher your company should be classified as a micro, small or medium enterprise according to the EU definition. You can find out more about this definition from the European Commission website but for guidance, if your company contains fewer than 250 employees it is likely to be eligible. The scheme is designed to fund small pump priming projects that have potential to develop new areas of research and collaboration. Mature projects that lack such potential and merely require routine analysis by our facilities are highly unlikely to be successful.

VOUCHER VALUE

Voucher applications can be of any value between £2,500 and £7,500. Vouchers can only be used to pay for access charges to the appropriate facility; all other costs, including sample collection, sample processing and sample delivery will be met by the applicant. Access charges will be billed at the standard external rate, which can be obtained from the academic leader of the facility.

COMPANY CONTRIBUTION

The company is not required to make any cash contribution towards the voucher but applications should contain some form of “in-kind” contribution. The exact nature of this contribution is flexible but for guidance, anything that contributes to teaching or research at the University will be considered.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY PROJECTS

Multi-disciplinary applications, which use more than one facility on the same project, are both permitted and encouraged. In such cases, a separate application form should be completed for each facility participating in the project and it should be clearly stated on each that it is a linked project. Each participating facility must be approached prior to making an application and the total contribution of all participating facilities should not exceed the maximum voucher value of £7,500.

APPLICATION FORM

The application for can be downloaded from the TD website.

The form contains two sections, A and B. All fields should be completed in both sections.

Section A attempts to capture details about the project; how your business will benefit and the role played by the research facility.

Section B sets out the terms of the agreement between the Company and the University. This should be signed by a representative of the company; the academic lead or manager of the research facility and a representative of the Technology Directorate. The Technology Directorate will provide the latter signature post-submission.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

Completed application forms should be submitted by email to techdir@liverpool.ac.uk. We will not under any circumstances accept paper applications. Following submission of an application we will send an email acknowledging receipt.
ASSESSMENT PROCESS

All applications will be assessed by the Technology Directorate Strategy Group at its next meeting after the closure date. The decision of the Strategy Group in respect of all applications will be final and there is no appeals process. Limited feedback will be provided to unsuccessful applicants on request. Unsuccessful applications will not be eligible for submission to any future round of the scheme. In exceptional circumstances the Technology Directorate may invite a resubmission but this will only occur following a dialogue with the applicant.

COMPLETION OF PROJECTS

All projects funded by this scheme must be completed within one year of the award date by the Technology Directorate Strategy Group. For many different reasons projects can get delayed, in such circumstances the delay should be communicated to the Technology Directorate as quickly as possible. We are sympathetic to most reasonable causes of delay. All successful applicants will be required to fill in a short form to summarise the outcome of the project; how it performed against its objectives; the value to the business and details of any future collaborations that might arise.