



**Young
Researchers'
Grant**

Young Researchers' Grant

FUND GUIDELINES

esplora[®]



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR JUSTICE,
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION



At a Glance

Who can apply?	Young people aged 13 to 21 who are Maltese citizens or hold a Maltese residence permit, applying individually or as a team of up to three
How much can I get?	Up to €700 per project, plus up to €1,000 for your researcher/mentor
How many grants are given?	Fifteen to eighteen projects are funded each year
How long is the project?	Up to 12 months
Fund total	€50,000 including fund management costs

What is the Young Researchers' Grant?

The Young Researchers' or Esploraturi Grant is for young people who want to investigate a real scientific question. Whether you're fascinated by the sea, the sky, technology, health, the environment, or something else entirely, this grant gives you the funding and the support to explore it properly.

This fund is about doing real research: asking a question, forming a hypothesis, collecting evidence, interpreting it, and sharing what you find.

Grantees are called Esploraturi, and they come in two groups based on age:

Esploraturi Nebbieta (Sprouts) Ages 13 – 17	Esploraturi Blanzuni (Buds) Ages 18 – 21
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Both groups go through the same process and receive the same level of support. The two streams just help us evaluate applications fairly, since a 13-year-old and a 21-year-old will naturally approach things a bit differently.

Who Can Apply?

Age

You must be between 13 and 21 years old on the date you submit your application.

Applying as a Team

You can apply on your own, or as a team of up to three Esploraturi. If you're applying as a team, all team members must fall within the same age group (all Nebbieta, or all Blanzuni). All team members will need to meet the eligibility requirements.

Nationality or Residency

To apply, you (the Esploraturi) must be a Maltese citizen, or be in possession of a Malta residence permit or of a Maltese citizenship certificate or have a Maltese passport.

Note: This requirement applies to the young researcher(s). It does not need to apply to a parent or guardian.

Your Project

Your project must:

- Be based on a real scientific research question
- Be a STEAM project (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, or Maths)
- Not have already started before you apply
- Not already have funding from another source
- Not be one event or data collection session that is part of a larger ongoing series

Projects that do not have a strong scientific basis will not be eligible. If you're not sure whether your idea qualifies, reach out to Esplora before applying!

Information Session

When the fund opens, Esplora will hold an online information session. This is a great opportunity to:

- Find out everything you need to know about the application process
- Ask questions directly to the Esplora team

Keep an eye on our website and social media for dates and details. We strongly encourage anyone who is thinking of applying to attend!

Your Researcher / Mentor

Every Esploratur is paired with an adult researcher or mentor who will guide them through the project. This person is there to support you and share their expertise, not to do the research for you!

Here's how it works:

- If you already know a researcher, scientist, teacher, or professional you'd like to work with, you can suggest them in your application.
- If you don't know anyone, don't worry, Esplora will connect you with someone suitable.
- Esplora will always make the final decision on who your researcher/mentor will be.
- Your researcher/mentor cannot be a close family member (next of kin).

Your researcher/mentor will receive up to €1,000 in recognition of their time and support. This is paid separately and does not come out of your project budget. For this reason, the mentor must have a VAT number or is willing to get a VAT number.

How Does the Project Work?

The grant runs over three phases. Here's what to expect:

Phase 1. Training

All Esploraturi start with a training programme run by Esplora. All the Esploraturi will do this training together. The workshops are hands-on, practical, and are led by professionals who actually use these skills in their jobs. They cover:

- How to set a hypothesis and digital research skills*
- How to design and manage a data collection programme
- How to analyse and interpret data
- How to write about science clearly
- Public speaking

The training involves a mix of online sessions and in-person sessions held on consecutive Saturdays. They are designed to build your confidence and give you the practical tools you need before you dive into your own project.

There will also be a workshop mid-way through the projects. The format of this workshop will be a relaxed, in-person meeting where the Esploraturi will share their progress and any difficulties encountered and give feedback to each other.

*The contents and subject of all the workshops might be slightly modified or amended

Phase 2. Your Research

This is where the real work begins! You carry out your own project, guided by your researcher/mentor and supported by Esplora. Every project is unique. This phase is all about your specific research question and how you plan to answer it.

Phase 2 can start at the same time as Phase 1, so you don't have to wait to begin exploring your topic.

Phase 3. Sharing Your Findings

Research is most valuable when it's shared! In this phase, you will:

- Write a short report covering what you did, what you found, how you spent your budget, and include photos
- Present your work at a science conference-style event, where all the Esploraturi share their findings with each other and with the public

This event is a celebration of your hard work and a fantastic opportunity to practise your science communication skills in front of a real audience!

Budget and Funding

How Much Can You Receive?

Each Esploratur/team of Esploraturi can receive up to €700 towards their project costs.

Your researcher/mentor can separately receive up to €1,000 in recognition of their time and guidance.

External Funding

Up to 10% of your total project budget can come from outside the Young Researchers' Grant. This means that if you have a €700 project, you can get a maximum of an additional €70 in external funding. For example, if your school, a local business, or another organisation is also sponsoring your project.

Note that projects that already have full or part funding from another source (more than 10%) are not eligible for this grant.

How Will the Money Be Transferred?

When your application is approved and you or your guardian (for Esploraturi Nebbieta) sign the grant agreement, you'll receive 70% of your funding straight away to get your project started. The remaining 30% will be paid after you submit your final project report.

- For Esploraturi Nebbieta (aged 13–17), funds will be transferred to a parent or guardian's bank account.
- For Esploraturi Blanzuni (aged 18–21), funds will be deposited directly into your own bank account.

Receipts and Invoices

At the end of your project, you will need to submit all your receipts, invoices, and proofs of payment (photos or scans) for the costs you have incurred. Only verified and approved costs will be reimbursed in the final 30% payment. So, make sure you keep hold of every receipt from day one!

What Can You Spend the Money On?

The funding is for costs directly related to your research project. Eligible costs include:

- Materials and lab consumables
- Equipment, sensors, or small electronics
- Software licences
- Survey incentives (e.g. small thank-you gifts for participants)
- Travel to field sites (places where you collect data)
- Insurance
- Training or course fees directly related to your project

The following costs are not covered by the grant:

- Subcontracting (paying someone else to carry out part of your research for you)
- Catering or food
- Travel costs for attending training or courses
- Expenses incurred before or after the project period
- Salaries or wages

How Will Your Application Be Assessed?

Basic Checks

Before we look at your project idea in detail, we'll check that:

- You are aged 13–21 on the date of application
- Nationality/Residency check
- Your project is safe and ethical
- Your project has a strong scientific basis
- Your proposed budget follows the guidelines
- Your project can realistically be completed within 12 months
- Your chosen mentor (if you have one) is appropriate for the proposed project

If your application doesn't pass these checks, it won't move forward to scoring. Make sure you tick all of these boxes before you submit!

The Scoring Criteria

Applications that pass the basic checks are scored out of 100 marks across six areas by an independent board of evaluators.

What we look at	Marks	What we want to see
1. Research Idea	20	Is the idea clear, interesting, and based on a real question or problem?
2. Research Method	20	Have you explained how you will investigate, test, observe, collect information, or carry out the research?
3. Creativity and Curiosity	15	Does the project show original thinking, curiosity, or a creative approach?
4. Feasibility	15	Can the project realistically be completed with the time, support, equipment, and budget available?
5. Learning and Skills	15	Will the project help you develop skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, communication, and confidence?
6. Impact and Communication	15	Is the project useful, relevant, or interesting to others? Do you have a plan for how to explain or present your results clearly?
Total	100	

What Do You Need to Submit?

Your application must include the following documents. Don't be put off by the list, most of these are short and simple forms!

Document	What does it involve?
1. Application Form*	Basic details: your name, age, contact details, proposed mentor, and project title. Project proposal: A short description of your research idea, research question, method, timeline, expected results, and how you plan to share your findings. Budget breakdown: A simple list of what you'll need the funding for, such as materials, equipment, software, or other project costs. Timeline: A basic plan showing the main stages of your project and when you expect to complete them. Ethical and safety declaration: A form declaring that your project is safe, age-appropriate, and follows ethical principles. This is especially important if your project involves people or animals. You will need to fill in and submit the application form online. You will find a link on the Esplora website.
3. Mentor / Supervisor Confirmation*	A signed letter from the adult who will guide you. This could be a teacher, researcher, scientist, or another supporting professional with a STEAM background. The CV of the mentor must be included as well. If you do not know a mentor, Esplora will help you to find an appropriate one. The final decision on the mentor, whether proposed by the applicant or not, lies with Esplora.
4. Parent / Guardian Consent Form	A signed form from a parent or guardian giving permission for you to take part. <u>Required for Esploratori Nebbieta</u>
5. Quotes	You are welcome to attach any quotations for goods or services that support your budget proposal. Quotations are not required but they might bolster your application.
6. Letter from project partners	You are welcome to attach a letter from individuals/ organisations that you would like to collaborate with. This is not mandatory, but if you mention partners, it will show the evaluators that you have already contacted said partners.

*All applicants are required to submit this document.

Timeline

26 August 2026	Opening of fund
2 September 2026	Online information session at 17:00
21 October 2026	Deadline for submission of applications
21 November 2026	Results of final evaluation and start of projects
28 November 2026	Training workshop 1
5 December 2026	Training workshop 2
12 December 2026	Training workshop 3
19 December 2026	Training workshop 4
9 January 2027	Training workshop 5
14 May 2027	Mid-way workshop
16 December 2027	Deadline for submission of final report
18 December 2027	Esploraturi project presentation event

NOTE: Dates are subject to change. Any change in dates will be communicated as soon as possible.

Tips for a Strong Application

Here are a few things to keep in mind when putting your application together:

- **Be specific about your research question.** “How does water temperature affect seagrass growth in Maltese bays?” is much stronger than “I want to study seagrasses.”
- **Explain your method clearly.** How will you collect data? What will you measure? How will you know if your hypothesis is right or wrong? How will you analyse your data?
- **Be realistic about your timeline and budget.** It’s better to plan a smaller project well than to over-promise and under-deliver.
- **Use direct and clear language.** Avoid jargon and acronyms, write your application as you would explain your project to a friend.
- **Show your curiosity.** We want to understand why this question matters to you personally. What made you think of it?
- **Come to the information session.** It’s a great chance to ask questions and get a feel for what we’re looking for.
- **Ask for help if you need it!** Your mentor, teacher, or Esplora staff can help you refine your idea before you apply.

Get in Touch

Have a question about the grant or want some feedback on your idea before applying? We’d love to hear from you. Reach out to the Esplora team and we’ll do our best to help: funds.esplora@gov.mt

