AIBC EUROCLUSTERS

Project funded under Grant Agreement no. 101074645 – SMP-COSME-2021-CLUSTER Call for proposals.

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Open Call for project proposals

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GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIBC EUROCLUSTERS	Artificial Intelligence & BlockChain for a greener and more digital economy supported by EUROpean CLUSTERS
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BC	Blockchain
EC	European Commission
ECCP	European Cluster Collaboration Platform
EISMEA	European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency
EU	European Union
FPI	Fondazione Piemonte Innova (Project Coordinator)
FSTP	Financial Support to Third Parties
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SMP	Single Market Programme
TWIN TRANSITION	Green & digital transitions

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1. ABOUT THE PROJECT

AIBC EUROCLUSTERS stands for Artificial Intelligence & BlockChain for a greener and more digital economy supported by EUROpean CLUSTERS. It is an EU funded project (Grant Agreement no. 101074645) under the "Joint Cluster Initiatives (Euroclusters) for Europe's recovery" call for proposals - Open Strand, which invites proposals focused on cross fertilisation of various industrial ecosystems, hence with no specific focus on one industrial ecosystem.
Indeed, the AIBC EUROCLUSTERS Project is centred on the Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Blockchain (BC) technologies and aims to:

- Further support the development of AI and BC solutions, especially those that support digitalisation, by SMEs and start-ups located in the European Union and in countries associated to the EU Single Market Programme.
- Support the uptake of AI and BC applications by different industrial ecosystems (manufacturing, mobility, logistics, energy) in need of digitalisation, and green transition implementation (Green and Digital) in order to become more resilient.
- Help European AI and BC SMEs access third markets and generate growth from international activities.
- Contribute to the reskilling and upskilling of the human capital across the EU.

The AIBC EUROCLUSTERS Consortium is coordinated by Fondazione Piemonte Innova – FPI (IT), in partnership with bwcon research (DE), ICT Cluster (BU), Asociación Cluster de Movilidad y Logística de Euskadi – MLC (ES), Environment Park - ENVIPARK (IT) and Bydgoszcz Industrial Cluster - BIC (PL).

The AIBC EUROCLUSTERS support is targeted to European SMEs and start-ups working on the AI & BC technologies, from the manufacturing, mobility, logistics and energy industrial ecosystems, that are interested in adopting AI & BC solutions to be more digital, resilient and green. The project implements several Open Calls to select companies and projects and thus will provide Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) for the following activities:

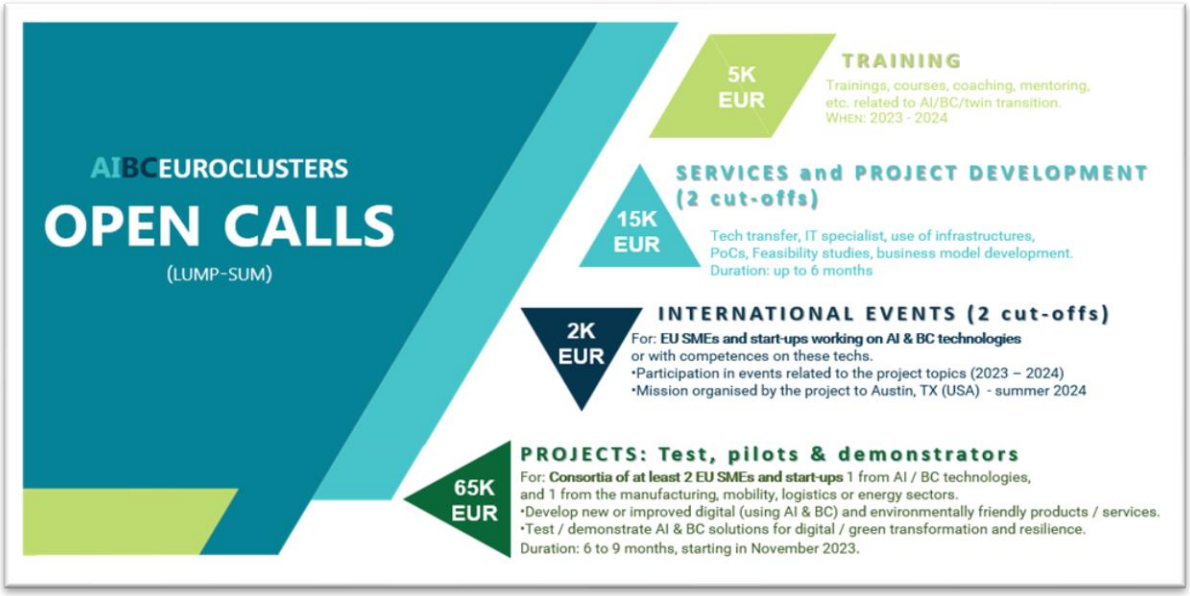

Figure 1. AIBC EUROCLUSTERS calls.

All information about the Open Calls can be found here: [AIBC EUROCLUSTERS PROFILE]

Furthermore, the AIBC EUROCLUSTERS project will implement an analytic approach in order to support the:

- integration and valorisation of information from SMEs, start-ups, local stakeholders from different ecosystems.
- identification of the most promising opportunities related to AI, Blockchain and twin transition.
- Definition of support programmes and services to accelerate SMEs from digitalisation and development of new/improve products and services.
- Improvement of management, coordination and collaboration capacity of EU clusters among different industrial ecosystems in the EU single market.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE OPEN CALL

This document presents the AIBC EUROCLUSTERS OPEN CALL FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS, which will support European companies (SMEs) to make projects for piloting and/or demonstrating new or improved digital and environmentally friendly products and services that use AI and/or BC to support/increase twin transition in at least one of the AIBC sectors: manufacturing, mobility, logistics and energy.

Within this call, AIBC has destined 520.000,00 EUR to carry out prototypes, pilots and demonstrators project activities. Projects must be submitted by consortia of at least 2 SMEs (at least one SME must be a technology provider of AI and Blockchain solutions) and must address one of the challenges described below, under "CALL TOPICS (challenges)".

Each project will be eligible to receive financial support up to 65.000,00 EUR. Thus, it is foreseen that at least 8 projects will receive financial support.

The best two projects will be nominated AIBC EUROCLUSTERS **Champions:** they will become testimonials of the project's support and share their results during the final event as well as any other related events. The Champions will be elected by all the SMEs funded by AIBC by voting after a pitch session around March 2024, where the projects will present their current working progresses and their aims and objectives.

No co-financing is required from the selected companies. However, they must commit to ensure the necessary resources needed to carry out the project and must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the development of the project. This will be also stated in the Declaration of Honour and the agreement that beneficiaries will sign before the start of the project implementation.

3. CALL TOPICS (challenges)

The OPEN CALL FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS provides funding to support SMEs in piloting and/or demonstrating new or improved digital and environmentally friendly products and services that use AI and/or BC and support at least one of the AIBC sectors: manufacturing, mobility, logistics and energy. These activities must tackle AI/BC/twin transition and must correspond to at least one of the following topics:

Macro-challenge	Challenge description	
1 Sustainability and Green manufacturing using AI and Blockchain (linked to environmental impact)	1A Blockchain implementation could improve the efficiency document accountability in all reverse logistics operations- Reverse logistics cover all activities related to the product once it has left its normal life cycle or is to be returned. Due to the further increase of e-commerce, reverse logistics has been more challenging than direct logistics and implies a major expense for companies. Besides, as in every supply chain process, blockchain will improve the manufacturing process and quality control enabling transparency.	Logistics
	1B Data analysis predictive/prescriptive maintenance manufacturing.	Manufacturing
	1C Reduce production generated waste and limit the environmental impact of production-processes. i.e. by enhancing of personnel-awareness; improving traceability processes of products; make a constant control of the end-of-life, and a resilient green transition.	Manufacturing Energy Logistics
	1D The manufacturing business is a dynamic environment, where there is always the possibility to be faster and more precise. With the constant development of technologies, and with their proper adaptation, the manufacturing processes can adapt and improve significantly. - companies need to provide employees a safer and more secure working environment. - Analysis of new parameters to improve the efficiency of manufacturing processes to improve energy consumption.	Manufacturing
2 Blockchain applications to support transactions	2A Enabling and disintermediating complex payments and/or the exchange of values and services, through the use of blockchain technologies.	All Manufacturing Energy Logistics Mobility
	2B Documentation management: concerning the goods, the driver and the vehicle transporting them, as well as the recipient.	Logistics
3 Identify the sources of inefficiency and take corrective actions through Blockchain / AI	3A Blockchain as a tool to record and monitor production activities and products quality in order to support companies to identify problems as quickly as possible and take corrective actions promptly.	Manufacturing Energy
	3B Blockchain can be introduced and improved among company-procedures to create an immutable and transparent record of logistics and transportation, and in order to support companies in better managing warranty claims and intellectual property. This provides support to companies in avoiding delays or errors in delivery, counterfeiting and ensuring the recognition of credits and rewards, and taking corrective actions promptly when needed.	Manufacturing Logistics Mobility
	3C Need to improve traceability methods for manufacturers, retailers and customers, for instance adopting PDA, and favouring the integration, communication and coordination between all the actors.	Manufacturing Logistics
	3D AI for automatic suggestion of the set-up parameters referred to the production lines. i.e. algorithms based on the characteristics of the work-order compared to the history of the processes.	Manufacturing
4 Renewable energy sources and smart grid management thanks to AI (machine learning) and blockchain applications	4A Integration of electric vehicles in power management platforms for smart grids to progressively include as more subjects and objects as possible in the electric-smart grids.	Energy Mobility
	4B Introduction and use of machine learning algorithms to forecast energy demands (i.e. starting from the energy-demands of micro and mini-grids at district scale) and thus to support companies in better managing their energy-flows and costs. Revision of the paradigm of adaptation of the energy production to the energy consumption, part of the consumption must be now adapted to the production taking into consideration the characteristics of intermittent renewable energy sources.	Energy
	4C Management systems integration to allow SMEs to increase the effectiveness of alternative energy installations by making data-driven decisions and optimising the usage of energy. SMEs that have invested in renewable energy installations currently need tools to efficiently manage green energy solutions and be able to make most of it. The support of green transformation of manufacturing SMEs and the effective management of energy sources could be achieved by implementation of smart industrial energy management software to monitor and control the utilities consumption online.	Energy
5 AI for Optimisation of Logistics paths	5A Improving the transport operations, by planning new routes in long-haul international routes, according to ordinary and unplannable delays. I.e. to develop a method able to re-plan a route (when delayed) and minimise the impact of the delay.	Logistics Mobility
6 AI for Smart Mobility and pollution reduction within cities	6A Road network maintenance (roads, pavements and signs): extraction of precise information and large amounts of data from different sources and obtain reliable pavement degradation models to allow accurate estimations of the maintenance actions.	Mobility
	6B Since most people in the world will live in cities by 2050, there is a growing need of improving the public transport and taxi drivers at urban level, especially during the "peak times" (as bad weather, football matches, concerts,...) where usually the demand rises while the offer remains the same. To develop an integrated method of machine learning algorithms that allows to map and know where the demand is located (customers that use most the public and private transport services), in order to provide a better service and avoid the use of private vehicles.	Mobility
	6C Pollution forecasting, monitoring and modelling: innovative sensing systems for measuring pollution levels and/or for making projections to support Cities response to the alarming and growing levels of urban air-pollution worldwide.	Mobility
7 Improving company's services and products under a Web3 perspective	7A Improving current company-services, through the development of products and services under a Web3 perspective. Goal: improving companies interested in developing products and services under a new Web3 Perspective.	All Manufacturing Energy Logistics Mobility

Figure 2. AIBC challenges for project proposals.

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4. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

4.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

The eligible applicants for AIBC open calls are companies the form of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as defined by the EU.

A SME will be considered as such if coherent with the Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC and the SME user guide.

As a summary, the criteria which define an SME are:

- Headcount in Annual Work Unit (AWU): less than 250.
- Annual turnover: less or equal to €50 million or
- Annual balance sheet total: less or equal to €43 million.

Furthermore, companies participating to this call as a consortium must be **officially founded before 31.12.2021** and registered in an EU Member State or countries participating to the SMP (see next section).

4.1.1. Consortium composition

Proposals under this call must be submitted by consortia of at least 2 SMEs:

1. at least one SME must be a technology/IT solution provider of AI / Blockchain solutions.
2. at least one SME must be from one of the 4 sectors addressed by AIBC: Manufacturing, Energy, Mobility, Logistics.

All SMEs applying as one consortium should be autonomous to one another (without capital or personal links). The AIBC partners, their affiliates or employees, are NOT considered eligible applicants and therefore can NOT apply for funding.

Consortia composed by companies from different countries will receive a bonus in the evaluation process. See Section 7.2.

The AIBC EUROCLUSTERS will facilitate access and connections to potential experts and entities through an online matchmaking platform. All interested organisations are invited to visit the platform (available on the call web page) and use it for organising meetings and developing partnerships, collaborations.

To be noted that AIBC EUROCLUSTERS only provides this platform as a support for networking activities, but all applications will be considered equally (independently on whether they from entities registered in the platform or not).

The AIBC project Consortium has the right to request formal registration documents from the applicants. In case the Consortium request is not answered within 7 working days, the applicant will be considered as ineligible.

SMEs that are under liquidation, in difficulty, or excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law, or by a decision of both national or EU authority are not eligible to apply for funding.

Double funding shall be avoided! The applicants must not be or have been funded by national or European public funds for the same activities related to what they candidate to by applying to this call. This is a fundamental principle for public expenditure in the EU: no costs for the same activity can be funded twice from the EU budget.

4.2 ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES

SMEs established in the Member States of the European Union (EU) and Countries participating in the Single Market Programme (SMP) are eligible to apply to this call.

The list of SMP participating countries is available here: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/smp/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_smp_en.pdf

Information on specific countries

HUNGARIAN companies
According to Council Implementing Decision 2022/2506 it is prohibited to enter into legal commitments with specific entities involving Union funding. This prohibition applies to the entire chain of Union financing.

This Decision stipulates that legal commitments must not be signed with any public interest trusts established on the basis of the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity maintained by such a public interest trust. This applies as of 16 December 2022 for as long as the measures are in place.

In practical terms, regarding financial support to third parties, Hungarian entities receiving AIBC FSTP funds must demonstrate not being part of the entities linked to the Decision, starting from the ones listed in this link (list is not exhaustive).

4.3 ACTIVITIES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

AIBC EUROCLUSTERS OPEN CALL FOR PROJECTS will provide funding to SMEs for activities related to:

- The development of AI / BC prototypes solutions for end-users to arrive to the MVP (Minimum Viable Product) stage at least.
- The testing through a pilot/demonstrator of new / improved environmentally friendly products, solutions and services, using AI and/or Blockchain in the relevant environment/industry.

All activities must have linkages with Artificial Intelligence / Blockchain and/or Green transition and should address at least one of the challenges described above (CALL TOPICS (challenges)).

Proposals must explain which specific activity will be developed and how, by providing all relevant information in the application form. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the impact of the financial support received are also asked within the application form, they

will support the monitoring process that will be put in place together with the AIBC EUROCLUSTERS Consortium.

4.4 TYPE OF ELIGIBLE COSTS

The financial support to be distributed will have to cover the activities described in the Application Form based on a justified cost-budget split. The costs are exclusively meant for performing the eligible activities as outlined above, in order to achieve the deliverables defined within each project.

The following is a list of indicative costs, but any costs necessary for achieving the set project objectives can also be covered and must be justified in the Application Form:

- Staff costs for the development and testing /demonstration of the solution and for training the industry partner to use it.
- Staff costs for the project management and reporting tasks or other associated activities, such as project promotion.
- Technical consultancy if necessary.
- Equipment or consumables needed for developing/testing the solution.
- Travel and accommodation costs between beneficiaries (if needed).
- Travel and accommodation costs for the participation to the final event that will be organised by AIBC EUROCLUSTER consortium (most likely in November 2024).
- Any other costs that are necessary for achieving the project objectives.

The budget will be defined as a lump sum at the time of the grant preparation. It will be distributed in two instalments during the project duration, based on milestones and deliverables achieved. The lump sum funding system provides considerable simplification for the applicants as it removes obligations on cost reporting based on timesheets or invoices.

4.5 DURATION OF THE PROJECT

Each project must be developed within 9-months after full signature of the contract and must be completed by the 15th of September of 2024 (including the final reporting).

4.6 LANGUAGE

The application form must be filled in English, the official language for AIBC EUROCLUSTERS OPEN CALLS. Submissions done in any other language will not be evaluated. English is also the only official language during the whole execution of the programme. This means any requested documentation will have to be submitted in English in order to be considered eligible.

4.7 ABSENCE OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Applicants shall not have any actual and/or potential conflicts of interest with the AIBC Consortium, during both the selection process and the whole project development. All cases

of potential conflicts of interest must be declared and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Applicants cannot be AIBC Consortium partners or affiliated entities, nor their employees or co-operators under a contractual agreement.

5. FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED

Each Consortium, composed by at least two SMEs, benefiting from this call can receive up to 65.000,00 EUR in the form of a lump sum. The proposals should correspond and be coherent with the challenges described in Section 3 and with the eligible costs in Section 4.4.4

Each consortium must identify one SME as the project coordinator. The coordinator will be the main contact with **AIBC EUROCLUSTERS** consortium. The coordinator will receive the payments of the agreed funding according to the payment timeline and conditions. The coordinator must then distribute the payments received from the AIBC EUROCLUSTERS consortium to the other beneficiary/ies without unjustified delay and according to the agreement.

Lump sum funding is a fixed payment defined up-front and set out in the agreement. It is paid upon accomplishment of activities, linked to deliverables, with no financial reporting needed.

This call has a total budget of 520.000,00 EUR to directly support at least 8 projects.

To be noted that beneficiaries can also apply to the other **AIBC EUROCLUSTERS** OPEN CALLS and get additional funding for the various activities foreseen, but the same SME cannot receive more than 60.000,00 EUR overall from the AIBC EUROCLUSTERS project.

6. PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

6.1 APPLICATION FORM AND SUBMISSION SYSTEM

The submission of the **AIBC EUROCLUSTERS** OPEN CALL FOR PROJECTS application must be done exclusively through the EU Survey platform at the following link:

https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/AIBC_OpenCall_Projects

A document outlining the information requested by the application form is available, to allow participants to prepare their application before introducing the information in the online form. It is a supporting document, it will not be considered eligible if sent by email, as only the application form, duly filled in and submitted online, will be considered eligible.

Moreover, the following documents must be uploaded to access the evaluation step:

- CV of personnel involved in the action.
- Activities timeline and budget.
- Declaration of Honour signed by each SME within the consortium.

Please, be sure of having all documents completed and signed, if required, before proceeding with the online application.

All this documentation is available to download here: https://piemonteinnova.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AIBC_Projects.zip

We warmly suggest you download a copy of the submitted application form, as it will support the project development in case you are selected and might be useful in case of complaints.

Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion

The AIBC EUROCLUSTERS project seeks gender balance, diversity protection and social inclusion. Therefore, applicants to AIBC EUROCLUSTERS OPEN CALLS are invited to take all measures to promote equal opportunities to their staff in the implementation of the action as well as address diversity.

Please include information on how you plan to address these aspects directly in your application.

6.2 NUMBER OF PROPOSALS PER APPLICANT

Each applying SME can be part of only one consortium.

Only one proposal per consortia will be evaluated (and possibly selected for funding). In the case of multiple submissions by the same applicant consortium, only the last one received (as per timestamp of the IT system) will enter the evaluation process, the rest will not be considered, meaning, the other applications will be declared non-eligible.

If the submitted application is declared non-eligible or fails to reach the thresholds needed to proceed to the evaluation, the applications that were submitted earlier by the same applicant will not be considered for evaluation either.

6.3 DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

This AIBC EUROCLUSTERS OPEN CALL FOR PROJECTS will be open until the 5th of September 2023 at 17:00 CET.

The AIBC Consortium reserves the right to add another cut-off date in case there is still budget available.

Only proposals submitted before the deadline will be accepted. After the call closure, no additions or changes to received proposals will be considered.

Further details about timeline and deadlines are available in the following section.

7. EVALUATION PROCESS

7.1 PROCEDURE AND TIMELINE

The **AIBC EUROCLUSTERS** OPEN CALL FOR PROJECTS will be available for 3 months (until the 5th of September 2023).

Only applications drafted in English and submitted via the link provided in section 6.1. will be considered eligible.

The following table shows all the main dates for the open call management.

Open Call	Date
Publishing date	Tuesday, June 6th, 2023
Deadline for submission	5th September 2023 at 17:00 CET
Evaluation period	~7 weeks from deadline
Information to applicants	Mid - October 2023
Acknowledgement of the selection outcome and acceptance of funding agreement terms and conditions (successful applicants) via email to aibc@piemonteinnova.it	Within 5 working days after receiving communication Beginning of November 2023
Preparation and signature of agreement deadline	Beginning of November 2023
Project duration	From 6 to 9 months from the signature of the agreement
First payment	20% of total amount. On the 2nd month, after acceptance of first report (deliverable).
Final reporting	By 15/09/2024
Final payment	80% of the total amount. ~60 days after the acceptance of final reporting and after the participation to the final event.

Questions can be asked via email to aibc@piemonteinnova.it from the day the call is published until 5 working days before the deadline, meaning until 29th August 2023.

7.2 SELECTION AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Coordinator SME from the Consortium must fill the online form (available here) that will allow the profiling of the companies, their competences, as well as and the description of the proposal, challenge selected, scope, objectives and other relevant information.

Companies applying to **AIBC EUROCLUSTERS** OPEN CALL FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS will be ranked according to the evaluation criteria shown in the table below.

Only full points will be awarded, no half points.

Table 1. Evaluation criteria for AIBC Call for Projects

Evaluation criteria	Threshold	Max Points
SECTION 1 – Excellence	**24**	**30**
Ambition: motivation behind the application to this open call, scope of the proposal, soundness and pertinence of objectives with the scope of the call	8	10
Innovation: how the proposed project/solution is aligned with the objectives and goals of the SMEs involved in the consortium and which further innovation is expected from it?	8	10
Coherence: the proposal must be coherent with the selected challenge (from the call) and contribution derived from the development and/or exploitation of AI and BC applications	8	10
SECTION 2 – Implementation	**21**	**30**
Appropriateness of the consortium & team: evaluate completeness (digital technology providers and industrial users are present) and complementarity (the provided solutions match with the needs of the final users), expertise and composition of the team and its operational capacity.	7	10
Soundness of the workplan: relevance of the tasks described, deliverable expected and the timing of the activities, identification of potential risks associated and their mitigation measures	7	10
Cost-effectiveness of the workplan: quality and effectiveness of the resources assigned to the project in order to get the proposed objectives/deliverables	7	10
SECTION 3 – Impact	**25**	**40**
Relevance: contribution to increase the innovation/digitalisation level of SMEs in the industrial and market relevance	10	15
Green impact: credibility of the expected environmental and climate impact of the project proposed.	3	5
Business impact: improvement of existing product or services or new market opportunities.	9	15

Scalability: degree of exploitation, transferability of results and replicability of the activities developed to other end users and other sectors (if possible)	3	5
TOTAL SCORE	70	100

A minimum overall score of 70 points is required to be admitted to the final selection stage.

The evaluation process is presented in Figure 3. The evaluation phase will start after an eligibility check of the Application Form and all required documentation, that will take maximum 10 working days. The eligibility check will be carried out by the AIBC Consortium partners. The applicants (coordinators of the consortium) will receive an email about the outcome after it is finalised.

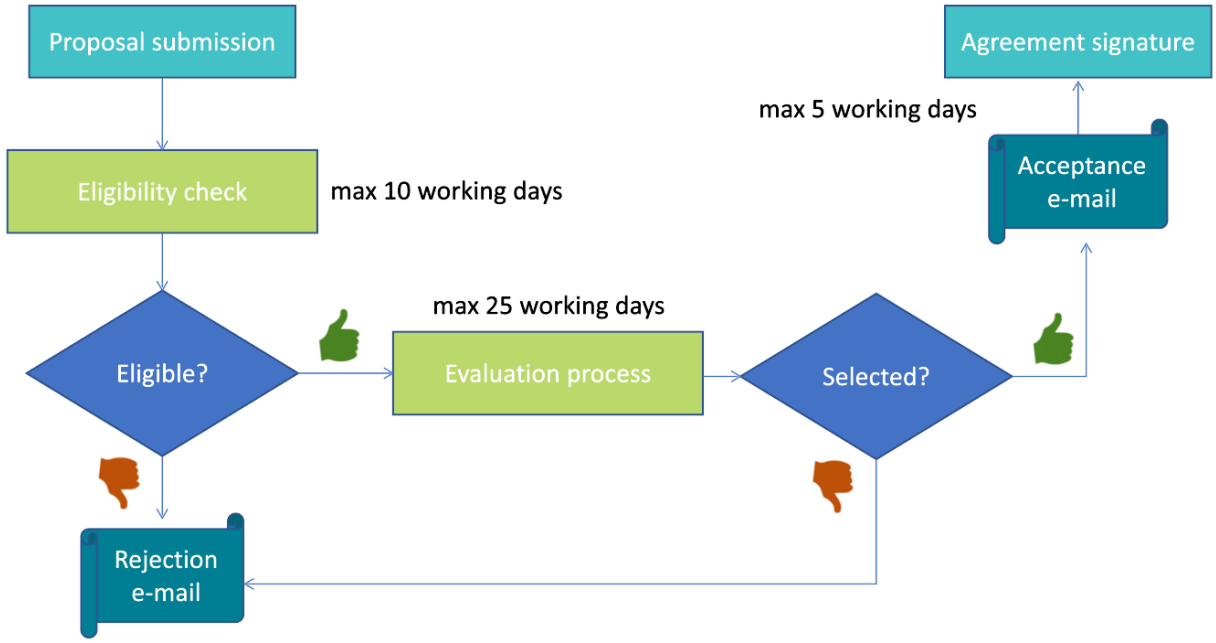

Figure 3. AIBC Call for Service and Product Development evaluation stages

The eligible proposals following the eligibility checks will be evaluated by an Evaluation Panel consisting of 3 representatives of the AIBC EUROCLUSTERS project consortium not belonging to the country of the applicant(s), to ensure transparency and no conflicts of interest. In case of need of specific technical competences, the AIBC Consortium may ask for the support of external experts (pro-bono, activated by the AIBC consortium partners from their networks), with wide expertise in the specific topic of the proposal.

The Evaluation Panel will assess all eligible proposals, taking into consideration the defined criteria. The evaluation process will take up to 25 working days. Once the evaluation process is completed, the Coordinator SME of each consortium will receive an email with the final results.

The final scores of each application will be calculated as an average of the individual assessments provided by each member of the Evaluation Panel. In case the scores from the Evaluation Panel representatives differs significantly, a meeting will be organised to present each evaluation and support it with specific comments, 2 more representatives of the AIBC

partners will also participate to provide an extra opinion about the proposal in question, in case the original representatives of the Evaluation Panel do not arrive to a common ground.

EXTRA POINTS

All consortia composed of partners from different countries will get 5 extra points.

Following the evaluation process, the ranking of the proposals will be generated according to the highest obtained scores.

Prioritisation in case of equal scores

In case a group of applicants score equal points, the prioritisation will be carried out as follow:

- 1st criterion: AIBC EUROCLUSTERS challenges addressed by proposals: priority to challenges not yet addressed.
- 2nd criterion: Presence of SMEs from EU regions different from the countries of individual AIBC EUROCLUSTERS' partners.
- 3rd criterion: Date of submission, meaning that first submitted proposals go first.

The selected proposals will be funded until the budget limit of the AIBC OPEN CALL FOR PROJECTS is reached.

7.3 ENQUIRIES AND COMPLAINTS

If, after receiving the results of the evaluation, you consider that a mistake has been made, you can send your complaint in English by email to aibc@piemonteinnova.it including at least the following information:

- Contact details (including email address).
- The subject of the complaint.
- Explanation and evidence regarding the complaint.
- Copy of the submitted application form (downloadable in pdf from the website).

Companies will have 5 calendar days to submit the complaint starting from the day after the communication of the results was sent. The AIBC Consortium will review your complaint within no more than 7 calendar days from its reception. If we need more time to assess your complaint, we will inform you by email about the need for an extension.

We will not consider nor review anonymous complaints, nor complaints with incomplete information.

7.4 COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS AND ACCEPTANCE

Once all proposals are evaluated, AIBC EUROCLUSTERS will send to the coordinator SME an email detailing the evaluation results (proposal score and short comment from evaluators). This email will also contain the decision to fund/not to fund the proposal.

All partners in the selected consortia will be then requested to sign a contract, defined as an "agreement", with the AIBC EUROCLUSTERS project coordinator (Fondazione Piemonte

Innova). The contract must be signed within 5 working days from the notification of the project approval. The agreement will state all the requirements and conditions to be fulfilled in order to receive the lump-sum.

See also Section 8.

7.5 CONTACT POINT

For any information, please send an email to aibc@piemonteinnova.it specifying the topic of the request and the question/doubt/information needed.

Information about the project, its objectives and activities can be found on the AIBC EUROCLUSTERS webpage https://clustercollaboration.eu/eu-cluster-partnerships/euroclusters/aibc-euroclusters

8. AGREEMENT

8.1 PREPARATION AND SIGNATURE OF THE AGREEMENT

The agreement will be signed by all beneficiaries (SMEs part of the consortium).

Once the beneficiaries have been selected, they will receive the agreement proposed by the AIBC EUROCLUSTERS defining the total lump sum to be received and the timeline for reporting and payments.

The agreement will also contain all the relevant information related to the company, and about AIBC EUROCLUSTERS' coordinator. It will also include principles and obligations[1] to be fulfilled by the beneficiaries SMEs, related to:

- **Conflict of interests**: The beneficiaries must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the Agreement could be compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other direct or indirect interest ('conflict of interests'). They must formally notify the AIBC Consortium without delay of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation. The AIBC Consortium may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.
- **Confidentiality and security - Sensitive information**: The beneficiary SME must keep confidential any data, documents or other material (in any form) that is identified as sensitive in writing ('sensitive information') — during the implementation of the action and for at least until the time-limit set out in the Privacy policy. Unless otherwise agreed between the parties signing the agreement, they may use sensitive information only to

[1] Following the requirements of the Grant Agreement (Art. 9.4) signed by the AIBC Consortium related to providing financial support to third parties (FSTP).

implement the Agreement. The beneficiaries may disclose sensitive information to their personnel or other participants involved in the action only if they: (a) need to know it in order to implement the Agreement and (b) are bound by an obligation of confidentiality. The AIBC Consortium may disclose sensitive information to its staff and to other EU institutions and bodies. It may moreover disclose sensitive information to third parties, if: (a) this is necessary to implement the Agreement or safeguard the EU financial interests and (b) the recipients of the information are bound by an obligation of confidentiality. The confidentiality obligations no longer apply if: (a) the disclosing party agrees to release the other party (b) the information becomes publicly available, without breaching any confidentiality obligation (c) the disclosure of the sensitive information is required by EU, international or national law. Specific confidentiality rules (if any) will be set out in the agreement.

- **Classified information**: The parties must handle classified information in accordance with the applicable EU, international or national law on classified information (in particular, Decision 2015/44417 and its implementing rules). Deliverables which contain classified information must be submitted according to special procedures agreed with the granting authority. Action tasks involving classified information may be subcontracted only after explicit approval (in writing) from the granting authority. Classified information may not be disclosed to any third party (including participants involved in the action implementation) without prior explicit written approval from the granting authority. Specific security rules (if any) will be set out in the agreement.
- **Ethics**: the activities must be carried out in line with the highest ethical standards and the applicable EU, international and national law on ethical principles. Specific ethics rules (if any) will be set out in the agreement.
- **Values**: the beneficiary must commit to and ensure the respect of basic EU values (such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities). Specific rules on values (if any) will be set out in the agreement.
- **Visibility of the EU emblem**: conditions and requirements will be included in the agreement following what stated in **Errore. L'origine riferimento non è stata trovata.**.
- **Specific rules** for carrying out the action, settled in the agreement.
- **Keeping records and supporting documents**: the beneficiaries must — at least until the time-limit set out by the AIBC Consortium in the Agreement (5 years after the end of AIBC project, i.e.: 31/12/2024) — keep records and other supporting documents to prove the proper implementation of the action (meaning, the participation to the event). In addition, the beneficiaries must — for the same period — keep the following to justify the amounts declared: adequate records and supporting documents to prove proper implementation and fulfilment of the conditions as described in the agreement.
- **Consequences of non-compliance**: If a beneficiary breaches any of its obligations under the agreement, the lump-sum may be reduced or terminated.

The beneficiaries must complete the agreement with the required information and all the SMEs' legal representatives must sign it.

The agreement must be signed using a certified electronic signature (encrypted digital signatures, such as those produced using e-signature software) and sent via email to aibc@piemonteinnova.it within 5 working days after its reception. It will then be counter-signed by Piemonte Innova, and a fully signed copy will be sent back via email to the company.

In case the company prefers to sign the contract by hand, this must be notified to Piemonte Innova when the communication of selection is received, thus before receiving the agreement. In this case, the signed Agreement must be sent by post.

In all cases mentioned above, a signature indicates acceptance of the agreement and all its terms.

A template of the agreement will be available here at least one month before the call deadline: https://piemonteinnova.it/bandi/aibc-euroclusters-open-call-for-project-proposals/?lang=en

8.2 Payments

Up to 65.000,00 EUR will be provided to the beneficiary consortia. The total amount of the lump-sum will be defined in the agreement.

All payments will be made to the Coordinator SME, who will then distribute the money to the other consortium partner/partners.

The payment will be carried out by FPI, coordinator of AIBC EUROCLUSTERS, and will be done within 60 days (2 months) after receiving the final reporting and verifying the SMEs participation to the final event (in presence).

The financial support will be provided in 2 instalments, linked to the submission of reports (as stated above), as follows:

1. First payment of 20% of total amount will be made within 2 months after the activity starting date, linked to a first report.
2. Final payment of 80% of the total amount will be carried out after the end of the funded activity and will be linked to the final report, including achievements.

This information will be included in the agreement that will be signed by the SMEs beneficiaries and the AIBC EUROCLUSTERS Consortium coordinator.

Further details about timeline and deadlines are available in Section **Errore. L'origine riferimento non è stata trovata.**.

8.2.1. General payment terms and obligations of beneficiaries

- All payments will be made in Euro.
- Submission of an application does not constitute an entitlement for funding.
- Expenses incurred for the implementation of the project must be made for the only and close purpose of achieving the objectives of the project and its expected results, in a transparent manner, consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

AIBC EUROCLUSTERS will not be responsible for paying any costs applied for and incurred by the beneficiaries in case of non-compliance with the terms and conditions of the AIBC Open Calls.

8.3 Monitoring and Reporting

As mentioned, in order to receive the lump-sum as set in the agreement, beneficiaries must provide a final report based on the objectives and goals stated in the application form and in the agreement. Furthermore, they must present the proof of participation to the final event (whose place and date will be communicated in the coming months by the AIBC EUROCLUSTERS Consortium). This can be done through certificates, entrance, badges, presence in the catalogue of the event, registration and signatures during the event.

Along the project development, beneficiaries must also present a first and partial report of activities within 2 months (the date will be defined once that the Agreement with the beneficiary is signed) after the activity starting date, to receive the 20% of the total amount.

This means, to sum up, that two reports will be presented by the beneficiary consortia and two payments will then be made:

- A first activity-report after 2 months to receive the 20% of the total amount.
- A second and final activity-report after the end of the funded activity and after the participation to the final event of the AIBC EUROCLUSTERS project.

8.4 COMMUNICATION OBLIGATIONS

For dissemination of the activities funded by AIBC, the recipients must credit the AIBC EUROCLUSTERS project through proper citation and appearance of the AIBC logo, THE EUROCLUSTERS logo and the EU emblem, with the disclaimer “This activity has received funding from the AIBC EUROCLUSTERS project that is co-funded by the European Union”.

The AIBC project will provide a communication package to all beneficiaries and this information will be also included in the agreement.

In order to communicate efficiently about the outcomes of this AIBC OPEN CALL, the AIBC Consortium can communicate several information about proposal awarded, also through its social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, ECCP Page), including:

- Description of project actions
- Beneficiaries’ information: SME names and countries
- Duration of the activities.

Detailed information will be further gathered throughout the project.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY, IPR AND DATA PROTECTION

9.1 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPR)

Your IPR will remain your property.

There are no IPR obligations toward the European Commission (EC). However, any communication or publication of the beneficiaries shall clearly indicate that the project has received funding from the European Union and the AIBC EUROCLUSTER, therefore displaying the EU and logo on all printed and digital material, including websites and press releases.

9.2 CONFIDENTIALITY AND GDPR DATA PROTECTION

By submitting the application, the company consents that the content of the application form will be shared with AIBC EUROCLUSTERS partners. The privacy policy is available here as well as linked in the application form.

AIBC EUROCLUSTERS consortium has the right to use non-sensitive information relating to the activities, materials and documents received from the beneficiaries for policy, information, communication, dissemination and publicity purposes — during the project implementation and afterwards. All this information will be included in the agreement that will be signed by the beneficiary and FPI, coordinator of AIBC EUROCLUSTERS.

In case external experts are involved in the evaluation process, they will sign a statement regarding the non-divulgation of the content of the proposals.

Depending on the data needed to develop the project, a Data management plan/strategy may be required.

10. ANNEX: SMEs checklist

For a complete application to AIBC EUROCLUSTERS OPEN CALL FOR PROJECTS, SMEs must present the following documentation:

1. Application Form.
2. Timeline and budget template.
3. Declaration of Honour to be filled by each SME within the consortium.
4. CV of personnel participating to the project.

A document of the application form is available as a support document to help participants to organise and develop the application to be presented under this call.

All the call main information is also available here: https://piemonteinnova.it/bandi/aibc-euroclusters-open-call-for-project-proposals/?lang=en

All documents can be download at this link: https://piemonteinnova.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AIBC_Projects.zip