

Call for proposals for SMEs and Startups



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document outlines the requirements and details of the Call for Proposals, which is supported by the **EPICENTRE project** consortium and **funded by the EU's Single Market Programme**. The call targets innovative SMEs and Startups and it aims to foster collaboration with Corporates in the **Health, Agri-food, Digital-ICT, and Fintech** sectors to enable the emergence of new cross-border and cross-sectoral value chains.

The selected SMEs and Startups will receive funding up to EUR 42.400 and additional business support services such as training workshops, mentoring, and matchmaking events. The call invites project proposals from SMEs and start-ups to solve a set of challenges provided by Corporates and aims to support the development of innovative solutions with significant impacts in the sectors and value chains they belong to.

The call aims to foster cross-sectoral and cross-regional collaborations with corporates and Midcaps, scale-up early-stage businesses, and increase the digitalization, resilience, sustainability, and greening of the EU industrial ecosystems. This document provides information on eligible costs, evaluation processes, and participation requirements for applicants.



2. INTRODUCTION

This Call for Proposal is supported by the EPICENTRE project consortium and is financed by the EU's Single Market Programme (SMP) under Grant Agreement 101074486.

The call is addressed to innovative SMEs and aims to enable the emergence of new cross-border and cross-sectoral value chains through fostering collaboration with Corporates within four sectors with strong synergies: **Health**, **Agri-food**, **Digital-ICT and Fintech**; to foster personalized nutrition, healthy and sustainable lifestyles.



The selected SMEs will receive **up to EUR 42.400** for the development of their innovative projects and will also benefit from additional business support services such as training workshops, mentoring and, matchmaking events valued in **EUR 6.850** to ensure that the innovative projects develop a marketable product, as well as the collaboration with Corporates.

2.1. WHAT IS EPICENTRE?

The project '[EmPowering Industrial eCosystems to boost clustEr facilitated green and digiTal tRansition in Europe](#)' -EPICENTRE- (SMP-COSME-2021-CLUSTER-01) proposes a holistic approach in accelerating market placement of business solutions brought by innovative SMEs.

EPICENTRE assists innovators to fast-track their ideas to market by identifying the real industrial opportunities based on societal needs, providing across the board technological/ business support services, access to corporate test beds and to external public and private funding.

It envisages the support of innovation in SMEs, fostering their green and digital transformation, enabling the emergence of new cross-border and cross-sectoral value chains in the Health, Agri-food, Digital-ICT and Fintech sectors.

The development of cross-border and cross-sectoral value chains will be facilitated setting up 3 geographical poles of activity in different regions across Spain, Italy and Lithuania. This innovation poles will be managed and energized by 3 regional representative Clusters in the target sectors.



EPICENTRE launches a call for proposals to offer SMEs the possibility to join the [EPICENTRE Acceleration Program](#), a 3-phase funnelled program with the aim of fostering the collaboration between SMEs (including start-ups) and Corporates; and the [EPICENTRE Academy](#), providing SMEs with a training program, mentoring and coaching services, competences due diligence and matchmaking events, amongst other initiatives. These initiatives include financial support. The beneficiary SMEs will receive up to [EUR 42.400](#) for participating in the EPICENTRE Acceleration Program and up to [EUR 6.850](#) for participating in the EPICENTRE Academy.

2.2. MISSION AND MOTIVATION OF THE CALL

EPICENTRE goal is to **develop a clear strategy for providing coherent support to SMEs and Startups** by fostering cross-sectoral and cross-border innovation to strengthen existing and emerging industries and improving the position of SMEs in global value chains through regional and industrial support. This implies the need to look at systemic obstacles and barriers of the target value chains that may prevent their competitiveness in the regions from fully exploiting innovation-driven entrepreneurial opportunities.

SMEs and Startups will be the main beneficiaries of the innovation ecosystem fostered by clusters, while the latest will play a central role connecting all the stakeholders and providing inputs on the key performance areas and regions where SMEs and Startups can innovate.



THE OVERALL OBJECTIVES THAT EPICENTRE AIMS TO ADDRESS ARE:

- To develop new cross-sectoral industrial value chains across the EU, by building upon the innovation potential of SMEs, in a context of collaboration with Corporates and the integration of different innovation actors and with the focus on reindustrialization for growth and job creation, developing a long-term internationally competitive supply (goods and services) based on innovative solutions.
- To help SMEs generate, take up and better capitalize on all forms of knowledge, creativity, craftsmanship and innovation, fostering their green and digital transformation.
- To promote the role of clusters, as favourable ecosystems for innovation.

AMONG OTHERS, THE EXPECTED IMPACTS OF EPICENTRE ARE:

- To improve the resilience of the EU industrial ecosystems by developing value chains interlinkages in the EU single market;
- Build capacity to increase strategic autonomy in the most critical supplies and technologies of their ecosystems, including upscaling of manufacturing facilities;
- Reinforce transformation into a greener and more digital economy;
- Foster up and re-skilling of the workforce whilst attracting talents;
- Reconnect and boost access to global supply and value chains.



3. WHO ARE WE

The EPICENTRE project is managed by 3 regional representative Clusters in the target sectors.

Associacio Cluster
Digital de Catalunya
(Spain).



Distretto ad Alta Tecnologia
Campania Bioscience –
CBIOS- (Italy).



Lietuvos Maisto
Eksportuotojų Asociacija
-LITMEA- (Lithuania).



4.INNOVATION ACTION LINES

The EPICENTRE project has identified two challenges per topic or Innovation Action Lines:

Topic 1:

Fostering Cross-Sectoral innovation in Digital and Fintech

(EPICENTRE-DIG-FIN)

Topic 2:

Fostering Cross-Sectoral innovation in Agrifood

(EPICENTRE-AGF)

Topic 3:

Fostering Cross-Sectoral innovation in Health

(EPICENTRE-HEA)

Projects are not limited to the referred technologies, but a clear demonstration of the impact in solving the challenge is required. The main impact is to encourage cross-sectoral collaborations by signing long-term agreements between Corporates-Midcaps and SMEs.

This fact will increase the competitiveness of the participating SMEs, facilitating the adoption of new or improved processes and technologies that improve the value chains' efficiency in the use of resources, open markets for green technologies and services and uptake of digital solutions.

Topic 1:

Fostering Cross-Sectoral innovation in Digital and Fintech

(EPICENTRE-DIG-FIN)



Digital-Fintech Challenge 1: How to apply digital finance solution (fintech) to cross- sectoral fields (data science, AI, blockchain, machine-learning, cybersecurity)

Digital-Fintech Challenge 2: Digital Payment and Digital Identity (block chain, data sharing, digital transformation, gamification)

The solutions can cover the following key performance areas:

Key Performances Areas

SUSTAINABILITY

Circular Economy
Economic and environmental sustainability
Energy saving

NEW DIGITAL SOLUTION

Patient monitoring
Edutech
Digital Twin solutions
Industry 4.0
Gamification
Digital Transformation

SECURITY

Block chain
Data protection and cyber security
Data sharing on cloud
Training and Gamification
Digital identity

Topic 2:

Fostering Cross-Sectoral innovation in Agrifood

(EPICENTRE-AGF)



Agrifood Challenge 1: Monitoring the health status of food production and shelf-life extension (security)

Agrifood Challenge 2: New packaging materials and smart use of resources (sustainability, automation and security)

The solutions can cover the following key performance areas:

Key Performances Areas		
SUSTAINABILITY	AUTOMATION	SECURITY
New packaging materials Reducing environmental impact Reduction of production costs Reuse of food and production waste Reduction of energy consumption Smart water resource management (for animal farming or soil and horticultural irrigation)	IoT Robotic process automation Artificial intelligence Cloud and big data processing Blockchain	Plant and animal welfare monitoring Cold chain Food service safety Data protection

Topic 3:

Fostering Cross-Sectoral innovation in Health

(EPICENTRE-HEA)



Health Challenge 1: Development of new digital solutions in the learning and behavioural sphere that can be used by patients and families (virtual care and new products)

Health Challenge 2: New therapeutic solutions derived from natural products and organic extractions (sustainability and new products)

The solutions can cover the following key performance areas:

Key Performances Areas

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability and reduction of production costs
Waste circulation, packaging and reuse

VIRTUAL CARE

IoT
Robotics
Artificial Intelligence
Cloud and Big data Analysis
Digital solution
Cyber security and related security aspects

NEW PRODUCTS

Circular economy and reuse of food waste
Organic production
Pharmaceuticals derived from natural extractions
Medical devices based on the principles of play and education

5. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The total amount for funding support for SME's projects is EUR 1.050.000, being EUR 905.000 allocated for the EPICENTRE Acceleration Program and EUR 145.000 allocated for the EPICENTRE Academy. The call for proposals is designed as an [Open Innovation Challenge competition](#). The maximum amount of financial support that an SMEs-project can directly receive is **EUR 42.400**.

The funding support applying for each beneficiary project are the followings:

	EPICENTRE Acceleration Program Amount per project (EUR)	EPICENTRE Academy Amount per project (EUR)	Total per phase Amount per project (EUR)
LAUNCH PHASE 1st call: 25 SMEs-projects selected 2nd call: 25 SMEs-projects selected	1.400	850	2.250
SUSTAIN PHASE 1st call: 12 SMEs-projects selected 2nd call: 13 SMEs-projects selected	31.000	3.500	34.500
DRIVE PHASE 1st call: 3 SMEs-projects selected 2nd call: 3 SMEs-projects selected	10.000	2.500	12.500
Total funding support per SMEs projects	42.400	6.850	49.250

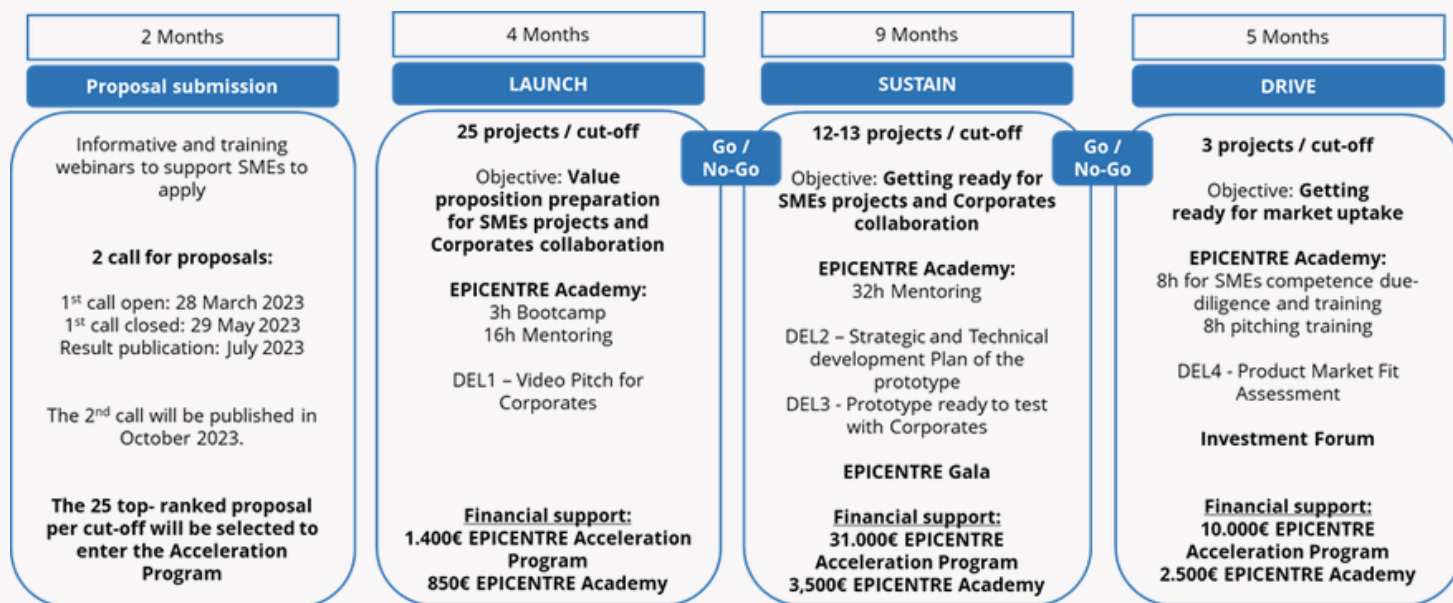


6. HOW IT WORKS

6.1. THE EPICENTRE ACCELERATION PROGRAM

The EPICENTRE Acceleration Program is a 3-step funnel acceleration programme divided in the LAUNCH, SUSTAIN and DRIVE phase. Each phase looks forward to advancing SMEs and Startups projects to achieve at least TRL 8, in collaboration with Corporates and by enhancing their hard and soft skills and competences, with an innovation and entrepreneurship approach.

EPICENTRE call for proposals award SMEs to enter into the EPICENTRE Acceleration program.





2 calls will be launched, the first one in March 2023 and the second one in October 2023.

In total up to 50 projects (25 project per cut-off) will be selected to enter into the **LAUNCH phase**, receiving EUR 1.400 financial support and a limited pool of business support services delivered by the EPICENTRE Academy. Up to 25 top-ranked proposal (12 projects in the 1st cut-off and 13 projects in the 2nd cut-off) in the LAUNCH phase will move forward to the **SUSTAIN phase**, receiving up to EUR 31.000 financial support plus a full package of Business Support Services delivered by the EPICENTRE Academy. The runner-up 6 projects (3 projects per cut-off) from the SUSTAIN phase will move forward to the **DRIVE phase** and will receive EUR 10.000 financial support and a set of ad hoc Business Support Services delivered by the EPICENTRE Academy.

Projects could receive a maximum amount of EUR 42.400 financial support for the EPICENTRE Acceleration Program and EUR 6.850 for the EPICENTRE Academy.

During the overall Program, each project will be assigned to a Project Officer that belongs to one of the Clusters, based on the technological nature and the planned region of impact of each project.



6.2. SERVICES FUNDED: THE EPICENTRE ACADEMY

EPICENTRE will provide the following business support services to the selected projects to contribute to enhance their innovation capabilities, achieve the product market fit phase either by formalising a business collaboration agreement with corporates or other market players (sales agreement, licensing, investment in the SME or acquisition...) or getting early adopters to use the technology, as well as financing.

The services to be provided to the selected SMEs/Startups or SMEs/Startups consortia will have the form of:

- Bootcamps
- Focused training workshops
- Business coaching for business model discovery and fine-tuning
- Mentoring
- Product-market fit assessment
- Matchmaking events with ecosystem players
- Re-skilling and competence development
- Agile methodologies

The topics to be addressed will include: business model development, value proposition, preparation of pitch decks, communication skills, B2B markets, IP management, negotiation skills development, internationalization process, marketing and communication strategies, funding opportunities.

To be entitled to participate in the acceleration program, all the EPICENTRE selected projects will have to go through the EPICENTRE Academy and receive the business support services to be paid with the corresponding financial support.

The business support services scheme will provide a tailored approach in line with the stage of development and needs of the selected projects.

6.3. THE PROGRAM PHASES AND THE SERVICES FINANCED

The awarded projects will enter into the Acceleration program and EPICENTRE Academy described in the previous sections. Both initiatives run simultaneously across the 3 defined phases: **LAUNCH – SUSTAIN – DRIVE**.



6.3.1. PHASE 1: LAUNCH

THE EPICENTRE ACCELERATION PROGRAM:

Up to 50 selected proposals will enter the **Phase 1: LAUNCH** of the Accelerator Program (25 proposals on the first cut-off and 25 proposals on the second cut-off). This phase runs during the first 4 months after the selection of proposals. Projects will be requested to attend the **EPICENTRE Academy Bootcamp** provided by Worsley Acceleration Services. In this bootcamp, SMEs will be guided on how to work with Corporates, receiving additional coaching support to prepare a video pitch presenting their value proposition. SME's will also have the chance to participate in networking activities. At the end of the LAUNCH phase, the EPICENTRE corporate board will evaluate and select a group of the best 12 projects on the first cut-off and 13 projects on the second cut-off to enter into the SUSTAIN phase.

The main outcome of the LAUNCH phase is the submission of the “Video pitch with value offer to the Corporates”. This video must be delivered within 3 months from the formal start of the project. Upon completion and approval of the “Video pitch with value offer to the Corporates” and the milestones specified in section 11.2 CONTRACTUAL CONDITIONS, each selected project will receive EUR 1.400 of financial support.

THE EPICENTRE ACADEMY:

BOOTCAMP & MENTORING SERVICES

All EPICENTRE 50 selected projects for the LAUNCH phase will attend the dedicated bootcamp. They will be trained on the methodology to be followed during the acceleration program as well as on the Pitch Deck preparation for the Corporates. The bootcamp will be held online, in English language, and its open to the selected SMEs Projects, who will receive up to 16 hours of mentoring support to apply the bootcamp learnings.

All the selected SMEs will have the opportunity to review and validate their work with the expert coaches assigned to identify additional factors (and/or strengths and weaknesses) to improve.

To benefit from the EPICENTRE Academy, the participating SMEs will receive **EUR 850 financial support** upon being selected to enter the LAUNCH phase.

6.3.2. PHASE 2: SUSTAIN

THE EPICENTRE ACCELERATION PROGRAM:

All the **25 selected projects** (12 projects on the first cut-off and 13 projects on the second cut-off) from the LAUNCH phase **will enter the phase 2: SUSTAIN**. This phase runs during the following 9 months after the projects' selection.

Projects will be requested to **fine-tuning their technical requirements and to develop a minimum viable product** which serves to (i) verify some key functional aspects of the intended solution, (ii) demonstrate the technical feasibility of the proposed solution under a representative operational environment, (iii) provides technical solutions for all critical functionalities, but usually does not have all the functionalities of a final product.

During this phase, SMEs will receive a full package of Business Support Services, including training activities, mentoring, and coaching sessions.

At the end of the SUSTAIN phase, the **EPICENTRE Gala** will be held. SMEs and Startups will have to pitch their projects in front of an audience of different innovation actors. The corporate board will evaluate and **select the best 3 projects** from each group (**6 projects in total**) that are ready to make a testbed with corporates, will pass on to the next phase.

The main outcome of the SUSTAIN phase is the submission of the “Strategic and Technical development Plan of the prototype” and the “Prototype ready to test with Corporates”.

- “Strategic and Technical development Plan of the prototype” should provide a detailed description of the design characteristics and the scope of the prototype and the required steps to implement it within the project.
- “Prototype ready to test with Corporates” should describe the minimum viable product achieved characteristics, its functionalities and the test bed project plan to be performed with the Corporates.

Upon completion and approval of the deliverables each selected project will receive **EUR 31.000 of financial support**.

THE EPICENTRE ACADEMY:

ONE-TO-ONE MENTORING & COACHING SERVICES

The 25 top ranked selected projects for the SUSTAIN phase will be entitled to receive a customized business support package in the form of mentoring and coaching services. Up to 32 hours of mentoring and coaching will be provided to each project. Some sessions could be provided in groups, as training on critical topics is envisioned to be provided.

The one-to-one customized support from these European experts will help projects to achieve the prototype phase, maximizing the success ratio when implementing the strategic plans on collaborating with corporates.

The format will be online and in English language.

EPICENTRE GALA

The EPICENTRE Gala will be held at the end of the EPICENTRE SUSTAIN phase. The 25 top-ranked projects will have the opportunity to present their project results to the Corporates and audience and to exchange and interact with the participating Corporates and other European stakeholders.

The event will be held in Barcelona, all the 25 top-ranked SMEs and Startups projects are invited to attend the event. The language will be English.

To benefit from the EPICENTRE Academy, the participating SMEs and Startups will receive **EUR 3.500 financial support** upon been selected to enter into the SUSTAIN phase.

6.3.3. PHASE 3: DRIVE

THE EPICENTRE ACCELERATION PROGRAM:

The 6 selected projects will enter in the Phase 3: DRIVE of the Accelerator Program (3 projects per cut-off), **developing testbeds with Corporates** acting as “entrepreneurs in residence”. This phase runs during 5 months after the selection of proposals. Projects will be supported to **continue evolving their products/services in a real corporate environment and to explore opportunities for long-term partnerships** with big industrial players and other collaborative business models. Additionally, a number of ad-hoc training and mentoring services will be provided.

The main outcome of the DRIVE phase is the submission of the “**Product Market Fit Assessment**” document. This document should describe in detail how the technology will be materialized into a new and successful marketable solution.

Upon completion and approval of the deliverable, each selected project will receive **EUR 10.000 of financial support**.

THE EPICENTRE ACADEMY:

SME COMPETENCE DUE DILLIGENCE AND TRAINING SERVICES

The top 6-ranked projects selected for the DRIVE phase will go through a due diligence to identify missing competences (soft/hard) to be enhanced. For this purpose, SMEs and Startups will receive tailor-made business support services for this purpose, up to 4 session of 2 hours. The format will be online and in English language.

INVESTMENT READINESS TRAINING WORKSHOPS

All EPICENTRE selected projects (6 top-ranked projects) will receive focused training workshops aiming at preparing their innovative projects to raise additional external finance beyond EPICENTRE.

Up to 8 hours training will be provided to assist the selected projects to increase their understanding and communication skills concerning the process of raising external financing from private investors and early-stage VC/corporate funds.

The format will be online and in English language.

To benefit from the EPICENTRE Academy, the participating SMEs and Startups will receive **EUR 2.500 financial support** upon being selected to enter into the SUSTAIN phase.



6. 4. TRANSVERSAL SUPPORT. FINANCED SERVICES

There is a set of transversal support to be provided along the 3 program phases.

FOLLOW-UP SCHEME AND HELP DESK FACILITY SUPPORT

Follow-up actions will be set up to facilitate a successful outcome of the transnational and cross-sectoral collaboration between SMEs and Corporates. Support and assistance from an assigned Project Officer throughout the whole acceleration program will ensure a regular contact and online interactions to achieve the defined targets and to unlock potential problems and enquires concerning the acceleration program and the business support services.

NETWORKING WITH CORPORATES

The EPICENTRE team will facilitate the interaction of the SMEs and Startups with the Corporates involved in the Acceleration Program. Participants in the SUSTAIN and DRIVE phase will have dedicated meetings to work with Corporates in solving their challenges. Several interactions will be made during the SUSTAIN phase for the prototype development and to develop the tests beds during the DRIVE phase.



7. WHO CAN APPLY

To be eligible to apply for EPICENTRE Call for Proposals, your company must meet the following requirements:

- Be legally established in an EU Member States or in countries associated to the SMP (as of today: Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein), or in Ukraine, when established in territories that are under the effective control of the Ukrainian authorities at the submission deadline.
- Belong to the value chain of the Health, Agri-food, Digital- ICT and Fintech sectors.
- Be a SME (including startup) according to the EU definition:

Enterprise category	Headcount: annual work unit (AWU)	Annual turnover	or	Annual balance sheet total
Medium-sized	< 250	≤ EUR 50 million	or	≤ EUR 43 million
Small	< 50	≤ EUR 10 million	or	≤ EUR 10 million
Micro	< 10	≤ EUR 2 million	or	≤ EUR 2 million

Proposals submitted by consortia ("joint proposals") are eligible. Joint proposals take place when a proposal is submitted by a group of SMEs / Startups of maximum 3. One of the SMEs / Startup will be the consortia representative (Project Lead) and will be the responsible upon the Cluster and the accomplishment of terms and conditions of the Sub-grant agreement. **The total funding support is provided per project not per SME / Startup.**

8. HOW TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL

8.1. CALL FOR PROPOSAL TIMELINE

1

The first call for proposal of EPICENTRE Acceleration Program will open on March 28th 2023 at 17:00 (CET). The deadline for proposal submission is May 29th 2023 at 17:00 (CET).

2

The second call for proposal of EPICENTRE Acceleration Program will open on October 4th 2023 at 17:00 (CET). The deadline for proposal submission is December 5th 2023 at 17:00 (CET).

3

The selected proposals will be notified within 2 months after the closure of the call for proposal.

4

The selected 25 projects from the 1st cut-off are expected to start the Acceleration Program in September 2023. The 25 projects selected in the 2nd cut-off will start in January 2023. The formalization of the participation will be made by signing the sub-grant agreement.

8.2. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION PROCEDURE AND REQUIREMENTS

- All proposals must be submitted via the [EPICENTRE Proposal Management Platform](#)
- All proposals must be submitted in English language.
- Proposals can be submitted individually or jointly by 2-3 SMEs / Startups maximum.
- Only one proposal per SME / Startup can be selected for funding.
- Applicants must complete the [online form](#).








APPLY HERE

9. ELIGIBLE COSTS

The financial support (lump-sum) provided to the Beneficiary SMEs-project will support their participation in the EPICENTRE Acceleration Program and the EPICENTRE Academy, the delivery of the prototype, the implementation of the testbeds and the preparation of the deliverables.

The lump-sum is aimed at covering the following costs incurred by the beneficiaries:

-  Personnel costs directly link to the SMEs-projects receiving financial support
-  Travel costs related to the SMEs-projects receiving financial support
-  Equipment or software bought or used for the SMEs-projects receiving financial support (depreciation, leasing, rental costs)
-  Direct cost for subcontracting products and/or services linked to the SMEs-project receiving financial support
-  Costs related to intellectual property rights (IPR)

10. EVALUATION PROCESS

10.1. EVALUATION COMITEE

The Evaluation Committee is composed of 1 evaluator from each of the following countries: Italy, Spain and Lithuania. Therefore, the committee will be formed by 3 evaluators, coordinated by Cluster Digital de Catalunya.

10.2. EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation process of applications, which will take approximately **6 weeks** after the call deadline is closed, is summarized in the following steps:

- 1 Administrative revision of applications and request of documentation, if needed.
- 2 Evaluation Committee's coordinator distributes applications proportionally among all the evaluators. SME / Startup general information (i.e., company name, country, etc.) will be hidden from evaluators to ensure a fair, independent process.
- 3 Each of the evaluators will assess the applications assigned to him or her and will fill an evaluation form prepared for the purpose.
- 4 Evaluation Committee's Coordinator will collect all evaluation forms and generate a ranked list from the highest scored application to the lowest.
- 5 The Evaluation Committee meets to validate the results and agree on the final list of selected SMEs and Startups and a reserve list.

10.3. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SCORING MECHANISM

To enter into the EPICENTRE Acceleration Program, the eligible projects will be evaluated and ranked according to the following evaluation criteria and scores, applying the ex-aequo rule, considering the same conditions to all participants.

Main criteria	Sub-criteria	Scoring
1. Innovation Potential	Alignment with the call challenges	[0 – 5]
	Innovativeness of the proposed solution	[0 – 5]
2. Project implementation	Technology readiness levels and time to market: Viability to move from TRL 6 to TRL 8	[0 – 5]
	Quality of the technical description provided	[0 – 5]
	Clarity and credibility of the workplan and cost structure proposed	[0 – 5]
3. Business Potential of the applicant	Description of the companies involved	[0 – 5]
	Description of the teams involved	[0 – 5]
	Experience in previous innovation projects	[0 – 5]
4. Expected Impacts	Impact in the competitiveness of the participating SMEs	[0 – 5]
	Impact in the target sectors	[0 – 5]
5. Motivation and commitments	Willingness and commitment to attend to the planned activities within the EPICENTRE Acceleration Program and the EPICENTRE Academy	[0 – 5]
	Willingness and Commitment to attend the EPICENTRE Gala	[0 – 5]
	Maximum score	60

Additional scores will be given to:

Main criteria	Sub-criteria	Scoring
1. Joint applications	Applications from 2-3 SMEs.	5
	Applications from 2-3 SMEs, including at least 1 start-up	5
	Maximum score	70

Evaluation scores will be awarded based on the criteria mentioned above. Each sub-criterion will be scored with 0 to 5 points, being 0 the minimum score and 5 the maximum score. All criteria weight the same, meaning that all the criterions count the same in the evaluation. There is an additional criterion that gives applicant additional points. The maximum score to receive is 70 points.

In case of proposals with the same score, the priority in the ranking list will be given to (1) the eligible proposal in sector of application that have received the lowest number of projects.

The selection of the SMEs-project that will move to the SUSTAIN and DRIVE phase will be made according to their performance during the previous phase. The evaluation criteria will be the following:

Main criteria	Sub-criteria	Scoring	Weigh
1. Attendance to the EPICENTRE Academy	100% attendance	3	33,3%
	80% attendance	2	
	60% attendance	1	
2. Quality of the deliverables	High quality	3	33,3%
	Medium quality	2	
	Poor quality	1	
3. Implementation according to project plan	No deviation	3	33,3%
	Minor deviation	2	
	Major deviation	1	
	Maximum score	9	100%

11. FORMALIZATION OF THE PARTICIPATION

11.1. VALIDATION OF THE SME STATUS AND ITS FINANCIAL CAPACITY

The selected project proposals will be notified within 2 months after the closure of the call for proposal. Those participants whose proposal is selected will be asked to provide a copy of the following documents related to the last two years of closed accounts:

- Balance sheet
- Profit and loss account
- Staff head count (in annual working units)

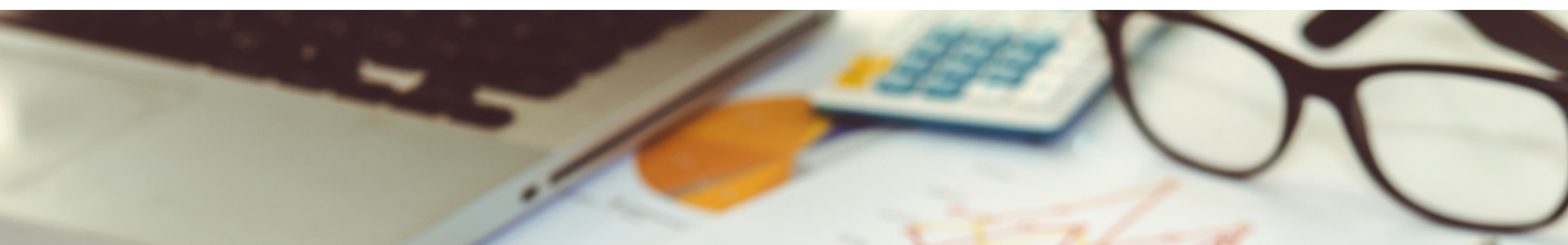
This financial capacity check will evaluate the recipient's financial health and stability through the documents listed above.

Based on the results of the financial capacity check, it will be determinate whether the recipient has the financial capacity to manage the funds effectively. If the recipient is deemed to have weak financial capacity, the EPICENTRE evaluators will consider alternative payment arrangements, such as payments in instalments or withholding of advance payments until certain milestones are met.

Specific cases:

For newly established enterprises (start-up enterprises) that have not yet closed accounts: a self-declaration, including a bona fide estimate (in the form of a business plan) for the on-going financial year[1].

For enterprises without turnover whose activity implies a long time-to market: a declaration of the investment made and the likely expected return (to demonstrate that it is engaged in an economic activity).



11.2. CONTRACTUAL CONDITIONS

The projects that have been selected in the call for proposals to receive the financial support ("Beneficiary SMEs-project") will sign an agreement ("the sub-grant agreement") with the EPICENTRE Project Lead Cluster - Associació Cluster Digital de Catalunya (CLDI) ("the Cluster").

The Sub-grant agreement specifies the actions that will be implemented in order to successfully execute the activities; rights and obligations of the contractor – that is, the beneficiary SMEs-project, particularly those on payments, performance of the contract, confidentiality, checks and impact evaluation.

The sub-grant agreement negotiation process is scheduled by July 2023 for the first call for proposals and by December 2023 for the second call for proposals.

The beneficiary projects will need to achieve several milestones to receive the payment of the funding support. The following table includes the mandatory milestones that the beneficiary will need to accomplish.

PROGRAM PHASE	MILESTONES
AWARDING phase	Agreement negotiation
LAUNCH phase	Payment for the EPICENTRE Academy
	Bootcamp participation
	Minimum 10h mentoring participation
	Submission of Deliverable 1 (DEL1) – Video Pitch for Corporates
SUSTAIN phase	Payment for the EPICENTRE Academy
	Minimum 20h mentoring participation
	Submission of Deliverable 2 (DEL2) – Strategic and Technical development Plan of the prototype
	Submission of Deliverable 3 (DEL3) - Prototype ready to test with Corporates
	Attend the EPICENTRE Gala onsite
DRIVE phase	Payment for the EPICENTRE Academy
	Minimum 3 sessions due diligence and training participation
	Minimum 5h pitch training participation
	Submission of Deliverable 4 (DEL4) - Product Market Fit Assessment

Call for proposals for SMEs and Startups

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