

AIBC EUROCLUSTERS

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

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Open Call for Digitalisation Services and Product Development

Version 2.0



HISTORY OF CHANGES

Version	Publication date	Changes
1.0	6/06/2023	Initial version
2.0	26/07/2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Declaration of financial capacity” form to be able to receive the 20% interim payment after 2 months. - Change of deadline → new deadline: 12 September 2023 at 17:00 Brussels time. - For the SMEs selected in the 1st cut-off, activities must be completed by: 7 June 2024 (new deadline, one week later than before). - Increased budget for the second cut-off: from 150.000,00 EUR to 180.000,00 EUR <p>All changed information within the document is highlighted in blue.</p>

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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
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SMP	Single Market Programme
TWIN TRANSITION	Green & digital transitions



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 twin transition (Green and Digital) implementation 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 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 for supporting 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 (Green and Digital).
- 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 THIS OPEN CALL

This document presents the **AIBC EUROCLUSTERS OPEN CALL FOR DIGITALISATION SERVICES AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**, which provides access to services that support SMEs in their twin transition (digital and green). It is targeted to European SMEs from the manufacturing, mobility, logistics and energy sectors, working on the AI & BC technologies and/or interested in adopting AI & BC solutions to become more digital, resilient and green.

AIBC has destined 330.000,00 EUR for supporting digitalisation services and product development activities. The total budget of 330.000,00 EUR will be divided between the 2 cut-off dates of this call, as follows: 150.000,00 EUR for the first one (deadline: 12th September 2023), and 180.000,00 EUR for the second one (deadline: 16th January 2024). Each beneficiary of this call can receive up to 15.000,00 EUR in the form of a lump-sum (thus, it is foreseen that at least 22 SMEs will receive financial support).

All services and activities financed by this call must be linked to AI or Blockchain technologies and must have a duration of maximum 6 months starting from the signature of the contract.

2.1. TOPICS ADDRESSED BY THIS CALL

The **OPEN CALL FOR DIGITALISATION SERVICES AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT** provides funding to support SMEs in their digitalisation planning activities related to services and Product Development.

These activities must tackle AI/BC/twin transition and must correspond with at least one of the following topics. Topics are grouped by Macro-challenges and presented with a brief description of each challenge.

A tag has been added, in colour, to describe to which AIBC industrial ecosystem the challenge is connected to.



Macro-challenge	Challenge/topic description	
1 Sustainability and Green manufacturing using AI and Blockchain (linked to environmental impact)	1.1 How AI/BC can enable / support the demonstration of CO2 consumption/emissions for environment friendly products (i.e. in view of a certification, to be more competitive for clients)	Manufacturing Energy
	1.2 Data analysis predictive/prescriptive maintenance manufacturing.	Manufacturing
	1.3 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
	1.4 Process efficiency to reduce energy consumption, possibly with the introduction of innovative robotisation systems. Among the greatest issues to face are: energy costs, lack of qualified staff, robotisation process of companies, develop tools for processing polymeric materials with new parameters.	Manufacturing Energy
2 Blockchain applications to support transactions	2.1 Enabling and disintermediating complex payments and/or the exchange of values and services, through the use of blockchain technologies.	All Manufacturing Energy
	2.2 Notarisation of documents and transactions, certifying the time-stamp, in order to favour the service-conversion and the certification. Avoid counterfeiting and ensure the recognition of credits and rewards.	All Logistics Mobility
	2.3 Documentation management: concerning the goods, the driver and the vehicle transporting them, as well as the recipient.	Logistics
	2.4 Intellectual property management: register and protect intellectual property such as patents, trademarks and copyrights.	Manufacturing
3 Identify the sources of inefficiency and take corrective actions through Blockchain / AI	3.1 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
	3.2 In order to create an immutable and transparent record of logistics and transportation, blockchain can be introduced within company procedures to avoid delays or errors in delivery, and take corrective actions promptly when needed.	Manufacturing Logistics Mobility
	3.3 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
	3.4 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	4.1 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
	4.2 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. i.e. differing some non-priority uses.	Energy
5 AI for Optimisation of Logistics paths	5.1 Improving the transport operations, by planning new routes in long-haul international routes, according to ordinary and unplannable delays. Analysis and study of 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	6.1 Road network maintenance (roads, pavements and signs): how to extract 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
	6.2 AI to support pollution forecasting, monitoring and modelling for cities, companies, etc.	Mobility

Figure 2. AIBC topics for digitalisation services and product development

When applying to this call, SMEs must select at least one of these topics in the application form.

2.2. ACTIVITIES TARGETED BY THIS CALL

The **OPEN CALL FOR DIGITALISATION SERVICES AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT** provides financial support for the planning phase of the digital transformation. Funding will be provided to SMEs for activities related to services and Product Development, such as:

- Technology transfer
- Use of infrastructures
- Proof of Concept (PoC)
- Business model development



- Innovation development services
- Resilience continuity plans
- Product/solution development

A more detailed description of the eligible activities can be found in Section 3.3.

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

3.1. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

The eligible applicants for AIBC open calls are companies in the form of **Small and Medium Companies (SMEs) as defined by the EU**. The beneficiary SME must work with Artificial Intelligence and/or Blockchain technologies or come from one of the industrial ecosystems targeted by AIBC: manufacturing, mobility, logistics and energy.

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, proposals for this call must be submitted by a **single company officially founded before 31.12.2021** and registered in an EU Member State or country participating in the SMP (see next section).

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.

3.2. 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).

3.3. ACTIVITIES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

The [OPEN CALL FOR DIGITALISATION SERVICES AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT](#) provides financial support for the planning phase of the digital transformation. Funding will be provided to SMEs for services and activities related to Digitalisation and Product Development such as:

SERVICE	DESCRIPTION
Technology transfer	<p>Technology transfer¹ (TT) refers to the process of conveying results stemming from scientific and technological research to the marketplace and to wider society, along with associated skills and procedures, and is as such an intrinsic part of the technological innovation process.</p> <p>Technology transfer is a complex process that involves many non-scientific and non-technological factors, and many different stakeholders. Good or high-quality research results are not enough for successful technology transfer; general awareness and willingness both at the level of organisations and individuals, as well as skills and capacity related to specific aspects, such as access to risk finance and intellectual property (IP) management, are also necessary components.</p>
Use of infrastructures	Services aiming to support innovation through the access and use of laboratories, existing testing infrastructures, databases

¹ Source: Competence Centre on Technology Transfer – European Commission https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/technology-transfer/what-technology-transfer_en



SERVICE	DESCRIPTION
	<p>that can support the subsequent phases of detailed design such as prototyping, performance definition and studies, testing.</p> <p>Activation of competence centres to carry out activities related to digitalisation.</p>
Proof of Concept (PoC)	<p>Demonstration of a product in which work is focused on determining whether an idea can be turned into a reality. A POC's goal is testing whether the idea is feasible and viable. In addition, it enables those involved in the proof-of-concept exercise to explore its financial potential.²</p>
Business model development	<p>Development of the company's plan for making a profit. It identifies the products or services the business plans to sell, its identified target market, and any anticipated expenses. It supports the identification of trends and challenges ahead.</p> <p>Business models are important for both new and established businesses. They help new, developing companies attract investment, recruit talent, and motivate management and staff, as well as identify and analyse new potential revenue streams.³</p>
Innovation development services	<p>To support the creation of new products and activities, the introduction of innovative technologies (AI or Blockchain) into existing processes and products, and in the full compliance with the rules in force on security. Some of the possible activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis for the identification of the product or process innovation. • Study and design of technological solution and leverage its assets. • Scouting and selection of best practices, technologies and skills. • Identification of preferential financing (EU financing) to support the activities of research and development. • Implementation of innovation with any prototyping activities.

² Tech Target – Alexander S. Gillis, Technical Writer and Editor.
<https://www.techtarget.com/searchcio/definition/proof-of-concept-POC>

³ Investopedia – Carol M.Kopp.
<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/businessmodel.asp#:~:text=Business%20models%20are%20important%20for,anticipate%20trends%20and%20challenges%20ahead> (last access: 16th May 2023)



SERVICE	DESCRIPTION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical and professional assistance in the presentation of the patents. • Certification of the innovative solution developed.
Resilience continuity plans	<p>Aimed at ensuring that organisations are prepared to absorb the blow of disruption, while guaranteeing a certain level of continuity with their original approach, processes and procedures. Proper resilience and continuity management systems enable organisations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain critical operations during and after a disruption. • Resume regular operation as quickly as possible. • Safeguard the business from financial loss. • Ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. • Protect and enable long-term organizational growth. • Prevent reputational damage to a company’s brand. • Keep assets, people and intellectual property safe in the event of an emergency.⁴
Product/solution development	Services or activities that allow SMEs to further develop their business in the fields of Artificial Intelligence and/or Blockchain, tackling the twin transition.

All activities must have linkages with Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and twin transition (Green and Digital).

Proposals must explain which specific service(s)/activity(ies) will be developed and how; provide information about the service provider that will support the beneficiary company; and present a timeline for the proposed services/activities. 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

All information that needs to be included in the proposal is better explained in the following sections.

Service provider

The beneficiary SME must include in the application the offer and quotation from their selected service provider. The offer must address the specific service(s) requested in the application form and provide proof of the expertise and quality of the provider.

The **AIBC EUROCLUSTERS** will facilitate access and connections to potential experts and entities (such as IT specialists, Digital innovation hubs, digital providers, digital experts, etc.)

⁴ Dataminr - Business Continuity vs. Business Resilience.
<https://www.dataminr.com/resources/business-continuity-vs-business-resilience>



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, as well as to request quotations for support services.

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

3.4. DURATION OF THE ACTIVITIES

Services and product development activities can last up to six months from the signature of the contract and must be completed by:

- 1st cut-off selected SMEs: 7th June 2024
- 2nd cut-off selected SMEs: 30th September 2024.

3.5. 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. The offer and quotation from the selected service provider must be in English. In case the document is written in any other language, then the applicant should provide the translated version in English, together with the original one.

3.6. 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.

4. FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED

Each beneficiary of this call can receive up to 15.000,00 EUR in the form of a lump sum.

Lump sum funding is a fixed payment defined up-front and set out in the agreement that will be signed between the AIBC project and the beneficiary SME, stating all conditions for funding. The lump sum will be paid upon completion of activities, linked to deliverables and reports. The payment can be carried out at the end of the activities or split in 2 payments (according to the result of the "Declaration of financial capacity" presented by the accepted beneficiary after receiving the acceptance letter and before signing the agreement), no financial reporting is needed for lump-sum.



AIBC has destined 330.000,00 EUR for supporting digitalisation services and product development activities, divided between the 2 cut-off dates. The total budget of 330.000,00 EUR will be divided between the 2 cut-off dates of this call as follows: 150.000,00 EUR for the first one (NEW deadline: 12th September 2023), and 180.000,00 EUR for the second one (deadline: 16th January 2024). Each beneficiary of this call can receive up to 15.000,00 EUR in the form of lump-sum, thus, it is foreseen that at least 10 SMEs will receive financial support for cut-off 1 and 12 for cut-off 2.

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.

4.1. ELIGIBLE COSTS

The funding amount must cover the costs for the services and activities described in the Section 3.3 and in the Application form based on a justified quotation. The costs are exclusively meant for performing the eligible services and activities as listed above.

5. PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

5.1. APPLICATION FORM

The submission of the **AIBC EUROCLUSTERS OPEN CALL FOR DIGITALISATION SERVICES AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT** application must be exclusively sent through the EU Survey platform at the following link:

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

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

- Quotation from the service provider (signed and dated after the opening call date).
- Activities timeline and budget: an excel file describing activities timeline and budget. Template provided by AIBC.
- Declaration of Honour. Template provided by AIBC, must be signed and dated.

Please, be sure of having them ready to be uploaded when filling and submitting the online application.

Furthermore, a document outlining the information requested in the application form is also available, to allow participants to prepare their application before introducing the information in the online form. It is intended as a supporting document to help participants develop their application offline but it will not be eligible as such. It is available for download here:

https://piemonteinnova.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AIBC_Services-and-product-dev.zip

Only the application form filled online and submitted will be considered eligible.



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 within 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.

5.2. NUMBER OF PROPOSALS PER APPLICANT TO THIS CALL

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

If the submitted proposal 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.

5.3. DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

This **AIBC OPEN CALL FOR DIGITALISATION SERVICES AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT** will be open for 7,5 months (June 2023 - January 2024) with 2 cut-off dates, as follows:

1. 12th September 2023 at 17:00 CET
2. 16th January 2024 at 17:00 CET

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.

5.4. 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 AIBC EUROCLUSTERS webpage <https://clustercollaboration.eu/eu-cluster-partnerships/euroclusters/aibc-euroclusters>



6. EVALUATION PROCESS

6.1. PROCEDURE AND TIMELINE

The **AIBC EUROCLUSTERS OPEN CALL FOR DIGITALISATION SERVICES AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT** will be available for 7,5 months (until 16th January 2024), with two cut-off dates (specified in the section above).

Only applications drafted in English and submitted via the link provided in Section 5.1 will be considered eligible.

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

Table 1. Timeline of AIBC digitalisation services & product development support to third parties.

Open Call	Date
Publishing date	Tuesday, June 6 th , 2023
Deadlines for submission	1st Cut-off: 12th September 2023 at 17:00 CET 2 nd Cut-off: 16 th January 2024 at 17:00 CET
Evaluation period	~ 6 weeks after each cut-off
Selection communication	1 st Cut-off: End of October 2023 2 nd Cut-off: End of February 2024
Acknowledgement of the selection outcome and acceptance of funding agreement terms and conditions (successful applicants) via email to aibc@piemonteinnova.it	Within 3 working days after receiving communication of selection, the signed "Declaration of financial capacity" must be sent via email, in order to receive the agreement to be signed. Thus: 1 st Cut-off: beginning of November 2023 2 nd Cut-off: beginning of March 2024
Preparation and signature of the agreement deadline	1 st Cut-off: beginning of November 2023 2 nd Cut-off: beginning of March 2024
Project duration	Maximum 6 months from the signature of the agreement.



Open Call	Date
First payment	<p>20% of total amount, if “Declaration of financial capacity” fulfils the criteria for triggering this payment.</p> <p>According to the agreement and after approval of a first report (deliverable), to be submitted at the end of the 2nd month of activities.</p>
Final reporting	<p>1st Cut-off: 7th June 2024</p> <p>2nd Cut-off: 30th September 2024</p>
Final payment	<p>80% of the total amount.</p> <p>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 documents. Thus:</p> <p>1st Cut-off: First week of August 2024</p> <p>2nd Cut-off: End of November 2024</p>

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 5th September 2023 (for the first cut-off) and 9th January 2024 (for the second cut-off).

6.2. SELECTION AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

SMEs must fill the online form (available [here](#)) to present all relevant information for the call: company profile, 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 DIGITALISATION SERVICES AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT** will be ranked according to the evaluation criteria shown in the table below.

Only full points will be awarded, no half points.

Table 2. Evaluation criteria for AIBC Call for Service and Product Development

Evaluation criteria	Threshold	Max Points
SECTION 1 – Relevance	20	35



Coherence of the proposal with the selected challenge proposed by AIBC call and contribution derived from the development and/or implementation of AI and BC applications	15	20
Solutions adequacy of the proposal with the fulfilment of the specific and general objectives of the SME	10	15
SECTION 2 – Implementation	21	30
Service provider(s) suitability and quality, in terms of competences and expertise	7	10
Financial assessment of costs necessary to achieve the solution based on real market costs	7	10
Timeline and organisation of work	7	10
SECTION 3 – Impact	25	35
Contribution to increase the innovation/digitalisation level of the SME requiring the service(s)	20	25
Degree of exploitation, transferability of results and replicability of the activities developed	5	10
TOTAL SCORE	66	100

A minimum overall score of 66 points is required to be admitted to the final selection stage. It is foreseen that at least 20 applications (meaning at least 10 per cut-off) will be selected to be supported.

The evaluation process is presented in Figure 3. The evaluation phase will start after each cut-off date with 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 will receive an e-mail about the outcome of the eligibility check after it is finalised.

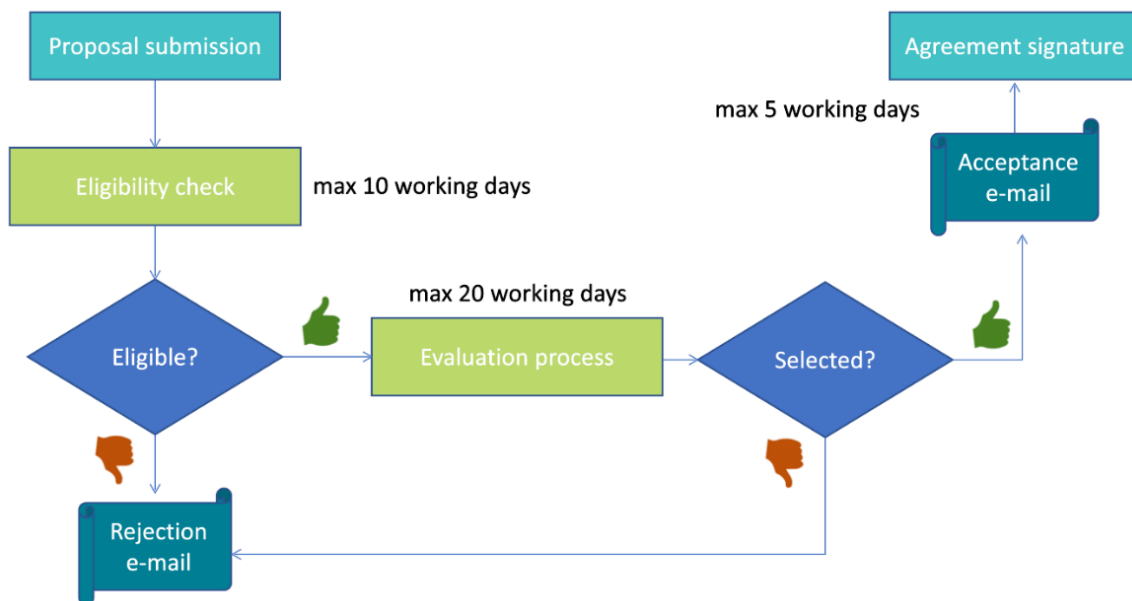


Figure 3. AIBC Call for Service and Product Development evaluation stages.

The applications of eligible SMEs, following the eligibility checks will be evaluated by an Evaluation Panel, consisting of at least 2 representatives of the **AIBC EUROCLUSTERS** project consortium not belonging to the country of the applicant, that could ask (if necessary) for the support of external experts, with wide expertise in the topic of the proposal.

The proposals will be evaluated against the evaluation criteria (see section 6.2): relevance, impact, and implementation. 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.

Following the evaluation process, the ranking of the proposals will be generated according to the highest obtained scores. All applicants will be informed of the final results of the evaluation procedure within ~30 working days after each cut-off date. In case of a delay in the evaluation procedure, this will be communicated to the applicants 5 days before the expected time via email.

Costs

The cost estimations will be assessed against the proposed activities under the implementation criterion. The Evaluation Panel will also make sure that the cost estimates are reasonable and non-excessive.

If overestimated costs are found, this will be recorded in the Evaluation Summary Report. This misalignment will also be reflected in a modified lump sum amount that will be proposed by the AIBC coordinator to the participant by email as part of the communication of selection, in case the SME is selected. In case the applicant accepts the new lump sum proposed, then the agreement will be signed including the new total amount. In case the applicant does not accept the proposed sum, then its application expires.



Prioritisation in case of equal scores

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

- 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: first submitted proposals go first.

6.3. 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 five calendar days to submit their complaint starting from the day after the communication of the results was sent. The AIBC Consortium will review your complaint within no more than seven 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.

6.4. COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS AND ACCEPTANCE

Once all proposals are evaluated, **AIBC EUROCLUSTERS** will send to the 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 and **the request for the SME to provide a "Declaration of financial capacity" form signed electronically. The template is available as part of the "supporting documents"**.

A contract, defined as an "agreement", will be signed between the **AIBC EUROCLUSTERS** project coordinator (Fondazione Piemonte Innova) and each selected company, stating all the requirements and conditions to be fulfilled in order to receive the lump-sum.

See also Section 7.

6.5. 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 AIBC EUROCLUSTERS webpage: <https://clustercollaboration.eu/eu-cluster-partnerships/euroclusters/aibc-euroclusters>

7. AGREEMENT

7.1. Preparation and signature of the Agreement

Once the beneficiaries have been selected, they will receive the agreement proposed by AIBC EUROCLUSTERS defining the total lump sum to be received, the conditions, obligation and the timeline for reporting and payments. The agreement will be signed by each beneficiary SME and the AIBC Coordinator, FPI.

The agreement will also contain all the relevant information related to the company, and about AIBC EUROCLUSTERS' coordinator. It will also include principles and obligations⁵ 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 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.

⁵ Following the requirements of the Grant Agreement signed by the AIBC Consortium related to providing financial support to third parties (FSTP).



- **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.

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-digitalisation-services-and-product-development/?lang=en>

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.



7.2. PAYMENTS

Up to 15.000,00 EUR will be provided to the beneficiary companies. The total amount of the lump-sum will be defined in the agreement.

The financial support will be provided in up to 2 instalments, linked to the submission of reports (as stated above), and according to the "Declaration of financial capacity", as follows:

1. First payment (interim payment) of 20% of total amount after acceptance of the report related to the first 2 months of the activity. The payment of the first instalment ("first payment") will be carried out by FPI, coordinator of AIBC EUROCLUSTERS, within 60 days after the acceptance of the first report. The introduction of the provision in the Agreement, related to the payment of this first instalment, shall be subjected to the favourable outcome of the financial capacity check method herein defined.

Each potential Beneficiary must complete the "Declaration of financial capacity" form provided as a supporting document of this call, get it signed by the legal representative in a digital form and forward it to aibc@piemonteinnova.it within 3 days after the reception of the Acceptance email, and prior to the signature of the Agreement.

Satisfactory financial capacity will be affirmed if the potential Beneficiary reaches one of the following thresholds, based on the beneficiary's last approved income statement information:

first option:

$[\text{Total amount requested by the Beneficiary} / \text{Revenues}] \leq 50\%$

meaning that the company must have revenues equal to at least double the amount of financial support requested to the AIBC Call.

second option, only if the first option is not reached:

$[\text{Total amount requested by the Beneficiary} / \text{Shareholders' equity}] \leq 50\%$

meaning that the company must have a SE equal to at least double the amount of financial support requested to the AIBC Call.

On the basis of the "Declaration of financial capacity" result, in case the threshold (option 1 or option 2) is not reached and provided that the Beneficiary complies with all other eligibility criteria of the Call, the Agreement will still be signed but no payment of a first instalment shall be inserted in the Agreement. In this case, the payment of the total amount of the lump-sum will be made after the end of the funded activity and will be linked to the final report and achievements.

2. Final payment of 80-100% of the total amount will be carried out after the end of the funded activity and will be linked to the final report. 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 document. The percentage of the total amount of this payment will depend on the approval or not of an interim payment, as outlined in the previous point.

This information, including reporting timeline and requirements, will be included in the agreement that will be signed by the beneficiary SME and the **AIBC EUROCLUSTERS** Consortium coordinator.

Further details about timeline and deadlines are available in Section 6.1.

7.2.1. General payment terms and obligations of beneficiaries

- All payments will be made in Euro.
- Expenditures incurred before the Agreement signature date, or after the project duration period, are ineligible for remuneration.
- Submission of an application does not constitute an entitlement for funding.
- Costs incurred for the implementation of the project must be used for the sole 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.

7.3. 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.

During the implementation period of the funded activities, the AIBC EUROCLUSTERS partners will agree with the beneficiary SME a calendar of at least 2 review meetings to evaluate the activity's progress and validate the work carried out for the implementation period according to the respective service types.

As mentioned, along the project development, beneficiaries must also present a first and partial report of activities within 2 months of the activity starting date (the date will be defined once that the Agreement with the beneficiary is signed), **that will also trigger the interim payment of 20% of the total amount once approved for those companies that have it foreseen in their agreement.** And a final report that, when approved, will link to the final payment (been 80 or 100%).

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

- **A first activity-report after 2 months. SMEs can receive the 20% of the total amount if foreseen in the Agreement.**
- A second and final activity-report after the end of the funded activity.



AIBC EUROCLUSTERS partners may request additional supporting documents, if deemed necessary, to evaluate the progress.

7.4. 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.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY, IPR AND DATA PROTECTION

8.1. 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.

8.2. 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-divulgence of the content of the proposals.

9. ANNEX I: SMEs checklist

In order to submit a complete application to [AIBC EUROCLUSTERS OPEN CALL FOR DIGITALISATION SERVICES AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT](#), SMEs must present the following documentation:

- ✓ Application form duly filled and submitted online.
- ✓ Quotation from the service provider.
- ✓ Activities timeline and budget.
- ✓ Declaration of Honour signed.

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

All the call related information is also available here: <https://piemonteinnova.it/bandi/aibc-euroclusters-open-call-for-digitalisation-services-and-product-development/?lang=en>

All documents can be downloaded at this link: https://piemonteinnova.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AIBC_Services-and-product-dev.zip