



PowerUp NetZero

Open Call for Business Innovation and Technology Adoption Services Guidelines for applicants

Version 1.0



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the European Union

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PROJECT SUMMARY

The **PowerUp NetZero (Powering Up Net Zero applications through the European Single Market)** project addresses the need for SMEs and start-ups to strengthen their role in Europe's green and digital transition through the adoption and development net-zero technologies. Through targeted support, innovation and adoption calls, focused training, and ecosystem collaboration, the project accelerates solutions in **solar energy, batteries and energy storage, hydrogen technologies, sustainable biogas and biomethane, and Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)**. Its added value lies in empowering SMEs to scale impactful, future-ready innovations, providing new competences and supporting them in market development and growth.

The project directly supports companies in enhancing their competences, opening to new markets and tackling their obstacles by providing Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) across Europe, for two types of activities:

- **Business innovation / technology adoption activities**, with 19 SMEs to be selected.
- **Innovation projects**, with 13 consortia selected, involving at least 26 SMEs.

The project will launch 2 open calls addressing key challenges on the 5 targeted areas.

The project consortium, composed by six European clusters (working on cleantech, mobility & logistics and digitalisation), from five regions, will build synergies with other initiatives, projects and consortiums, deliver a long-term strategy for sustaining net-zero initiatives. Key outputs include reports on new-to-firm products, services, and business process innovations, as well as policy recommendations related to support SMEs across Europe to better implement, adopt and enhance their net-zero technologies knowledge and thus further develop their markets and impact.

Project information

Project name	Powering Up Net Zero applications through the European Single Market
Project acronym	PowerUp NetZero
Funding body	European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency
Call / Topic	SMP-COSME-2024-CLUSTER — Joint Cluster Initiatives (EUROCLUSTERS) for Europe's recovery
Type of action	Support services to SMEs and Start-ups
Project start date	1.10.2025
Project end date	1.10.2028
Project duration	36 months
Coordinator	Fondazione Piemonte Innova
Project LinkedIn	https://www.linkedin.com/company/powerup-netzero

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACRONYM	MEANING
BESS	Battery Energy Storage System
CCS	Carbon Capture and Storage
CO2	Carbon dioxide
EU	European Union
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
FPI	Fondazione Piemonte Innova
FSTP	Financial Support for Third Parties
MLC	Basque Mobility and Logistics Cluster
NZT	Net Zero Technologies
PowerUp NetZero	Powering Up Net Zero applications through the European Single Market
PV	Photovoltaic
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMP	Single Market Programme
TRL	Technology Readiness Level
KPI	Key Performance Indicators

Document history

Version	Date	Description
1	23/04/2026	First version
2	19/05/2026	Final version

1. OVERVIEW OF THIS OPEN CALL

This document presents the **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION SERVICES**, which provides access to services that support SMEs in their twin transition (digital and green). Specifically, innovation support services and technology transfer to support the adoption and improvement of **Net-Zero technologies** in products, processes and services, particularly in solar energy, batteries and storage, hydrogen, sustainable biogas and biomethane, carbon capture and storage, and related digital solutions.

PowerUp NetZero has allocated EUR 380,000 to support Business Innovation and Technology Adoption Services, with financial support for 19 companies and a **maximum financial contribution of EUR 20.000,00** per beneficiary.

Moreover, beneficiaries must ensure a **minimum 20% co-funding rate** of the total budget of the supported activity. Applicants will be required to submit information on their company profile, needs, objectives, the service and service provider selected, as well as an implementation timeline and expected impacts. Funded activities may last up to **7 months** from the signature of the agreement, and payments will be linked to reporting.

The call has a **deadline on 30th July 2026 at 17:00 CEST**.

All services and activities financed by this call must be linked to Net-Zero technologies and must have a duration of maximum 7 months starting from the signature of the Grant Agreement.

1.1 NET ZERO TECHNOLOGIES ADDRESSED BY THIS CALL

The **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION SERVICES** provides funding to support SMEs in their digitalisation planning activities related to net-zero technologies and applications.

The call focuses on the following five Net-Zero Technologies:

- **Solar energy**
- **Battery and energy storage**
- **H2 technologies**
- **Sustainable biogas and biomethane**
- **Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)**

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

1.2 ACTIVITIES TARGETED BY THIS CALL

The **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION SERVICES** provides financial support for the planning phase of the Net-Zero Technology adoption. Funding will be provided to SMEs and start-ups for activities related to **pre-investment services**, such as:

- Adoption and improvement of net-zero technologies and solutions
- Business process innovation linked to the green and digital transition
- Integration of digital solutions supporting net-zero deployment and efficiency
- Market uptake of net-zero applications
- Innovation development services.

A more detailed description of the eligible activities can be found in Section 2.3.

2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

This section sets out the eligibility criteria applicable to applicants, activities and proposals under this call.

2.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants must be single SMEs or start-ups **established in an EU Member State** or in a country participating in the **Single Market Programme (SMP)** at the moment of the call launching date. **More information in this sense can be found below**, in Section 2.2.

To be eligible, applicants must:

- **qualify as an SME** in line with [Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC](#) and the [SME user guide](#). Which means: have fewer than 250 employees; and have either an annual turnover of up to EUR 50 million or an annual balance sheet total of up to EUR 43 million;
- in all cases, including start-ups, have at least one closed and validated financial year.
- be established in an eligible country under the Call.

Applicants are not eligible if they:

- are under liquidation or in difficulty.
- are excluded from receiving EU funding under national or EU law.
- receive or have received double public funding for the same activities.
- are intermediary organisations.
- have conflict of interest with the PowerUp NetZero Consortium.

Applicants may be asked to provide official registration documents. Failure to provide them within 7 working days may result in the proposal being declared ineligible.

2.2 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 **PowerUp NetZero** 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).

2.3 ACTIVITIES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

The **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION SERVICES** provides financial support for helping SMEs and start-ups adopt or improve net-zero technologies and solutions in their processes, products or services. Funded activities should support business process innovation linked to the uptake of new-to-firm technologies **within existing operations**, contributing to the green and digital transition, greater sustainability, resource efficiency and resilience, including through **relevant digital solutions**.

Table 1: Services eligible for PowerUp NetZero Open Call for Business Innovation and Technology Adoption Services

SERVICES	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
Technical and economic feasibility studies	Services assessing the technical and economic viability of adopting and integrating at least one of the 5 project's Net-Zero technologies (Section 1.1) , including requirements, costs, risks and business case.	Feasibility study for installing battery storage in a warehouse, including sizing, costs and payback analysis.
		PV efficiency feasibility study (management/ operativity in existent solar parks/ PV placement/...).
		Financial viability assessment of sustainable biogas or biomethane production, with a focus on maximising cost savings and the valorisation of fermentation residues.
		Feasibility study for CO2 transport optimisation, aimed at improving efficiency and reducing costs.
Technology adoption roadmaps	Services supporting the definition of a roadmap for adopting at least one of the 5 project's Net-Zero technology (Section 1.1) , including scope, key steps, timeline, investment resources and expected impact.	Roadmap for the adoption of a battery energy storage system (BESS) to improve energy flexibility and backup capacity in an SME facility.
Integration planning and basic engineering	Services supporting the preliminary design and integration of at least one of the 5 project's Net-Zero solution (Section 1.1) into the company's processes, products, services or existing facilities , excluding full-scale implementation works.	Preliminary engineering for integrating biomethane into an industrial thermal process or vehicle fleet operation.
Digital services for Net-Zero adoption	Services such as monitoring, preparatory data integration, predictive maintenance, digital twins	AI-based monitoring and predictive maintenance service for a solar PV and battery storage system.

SERVICES	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
Circularity, sustainability, ESG¹ or compliance support	or AI-based optimisation, where clearly linked to at least one of the 5 project's specific Net-Zero technology (Section 1.1).	Digital energy solutions to avoid disruption in the grid and storage decentralization.
	Services including technical compliance, environmental validation, baseline assessments or circularity-related support. directly linked to the adoption of a specific Net-Zero technology (Section 1.1).	End-of-life, recyclability and compliance assessment for solar panels or battery systems. Assessment of the ESG impact of implementing Net-Zero Technologies.
Go-to-market and scaling support	Services supporting the market uptake, commercial deployment or targeted scouting of defined Net-Zero solutions already developed, or to be further developed, by the applicant SME.	Market uptake strategy for an SME that has developed a carbon capture and storage (CCS) solution for industrial applications, including replication potential and feasibility across multiple sites. Technology scouting for BESS, CCS components, digital energy platforms. Comparative analysis of alternative technical solutions with performance and cost implications. Make-or-buy analysis related to Net-Zero deployment.

All activities must have linkages with at least one of the project's 5 Net-Zero Technologies (Solar energy, Battery and energy storage, H2 technologies, Sustainable biogas/ biomethane, and Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)).

Non-priority / excluded services:

- **Highly innovative** pilot, demonstration or TRL 6–7 validation activities, which are more appropriately addressed through the Innovation Projects call.
- **Stand-alone and Generic** sustainability, digitalisation or business consultancy not directly linked to a specific Net-Zero technology or adoption process.
- Services equivalent to **routine operational consultancy** or standard procurement support without a clear innovation and technology adoption dimension.

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 **PowerUp NetZero** Consortium.

¹ Environmental, Social and Governance performance.

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

2.4 SERVICE PROVIDER

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

Given the type of activities that the call covers, proposal cannot include more than 3 different service providers. Additionally, the applicant must properly justify the selection of a specific service provider/s to ensure best value for money while strictly avoiding any conflicts of interest.

Under this call, the **same service provider may provide services to a maximum of two (2) beneficiaries**. Proposals involving a service provider that has already reached this limit shall be considered ineligible. Where more than two applications propose the same service provider, only the two highest-scoring applications will be retained for further consideration. As a general rule, only the highest-scoring application will be selected for funding. Exceptionally, the Consortium may decide to fund an additional application where this is duly justified by the need to ensure coverage of a net-zero technology or challenge that is not otherwise addressed by the other selected proposals.

Conflict of interests: The beneficiaries must take all measures to prevent any situation of conflict of interests that involves the provider as for example involving family, emotional life, economic interest or any other direct or indirect interest ('conflict of interests').

Replacement of the service provider is not permitted: A more detailed description can be found in Section 6.1.

2.5 DURATION OF THE ACTIVITIES

Services and business innovation activities can last up to seven (7) months from the signature of the agreement and must be completed by 27th May 2027 at the latest.

2.6 LANGUAGE

The application form must be filled in English, the official language for **PowerUp NetZero 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.

2.7 ABSENCE OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Applicants shall not have any actual and/or potential conflicts of interest with the **PowerUp NetZero 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 **PowerUp NetZero Consortium** partners or affiliated entities nor their employees or co-operators under a contractual agreement.

3. FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED

Each beneficiary of this call can receive up to 20.000,00 EUR in the form of a lump sum. The grant may cover a maximum of 80% of the total eligible costs. The remaining 20% must be co-financed by the beneficiary through private financial sources, thus it cannot be covered by other EU or public funds.

EXAMPLE 1: Application presented with a service provider quotation of 25.000,00 euro. The project provides 80% of the budget (20.000,00 euro) and the SME must cover the 20% (5.000,00 euro).

EXAMPLE 2: Application presented with a service provider quotation of 20.000,00 euro. The project provides 80% of the budget (16.000,00 euro) and the SME must cover the 20% (4.000,00 euro).

EXAMPLE 3: Application presented with a service provider quotation of 35.000,00 euro. The project provides maximum 20.000,00 euro (57,14% of the budget) and the SME must cover the rest (15.000,00 euro).

PowerUp NetZero has destined 380.000,00 EUR for supporting business innovation and technology adoption services. Financial support will be granted to at least 19 companies, once the grant agreement is signed.



Figure 1 - Payment Schedule for PowerUp NetZero Open Call for Business Innovation and Technology Adoption Services

The Agreement may only be signed once the SME has submitted either:

- formal acceptance of the service provider's quotation in English, or
- a signed contract with the service provider in English, or
- a declaration in English confirming acceptance of the provider's quotation.

Payments will be made in two instalments:

- 50% interim payment, if all financial requests and checks are met.
- 50% - 100% final payment, after completion of the service and approval of the final report.

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

3.1 ELIGIBLE COSTS

The funding amount covers only the costs of the external services and eligible activities described in Section 2.3 and in the Application Form, on the basis of a **justified quotation**.

It does not cover VAT or internal costs of the applicant, including staff costs, indirect costs or in-kind contributions.

Eligible costs are strictly limited to the performance of the services and activities listed above. Funded activities must be clearly adoption-oriented and are expected to generate practical results, such as feasibility studies, pilots, integration, validation, or comparable steps towards implementation.

3.2 CO-FUNDING

Beneficiaries must ensure a **minimum co-funding rate of 20%** of the total eligible budget of the supported activity, to be covered through private financial sources. Applicants should plan budgets in line with the co-funding rate applicable to the requested grant amount.

By “financial sources” the call refers to a **financial investment**, i.e. capital funding, and **not**, for example, staff costs, in-kind contributions, or similar items. In practical terms, this means that, in addition to the FSTP funding, SME projects will be required to be co-financed through private capital or other sources, provided that such contributions are always structured as financial investments.

4. PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

The **PowerUp NetZero** Open Call for Business Innovation and Technology Adoption Services supports SMEs through the uptake and implementation of Net Zero technologies via external innovation and technology adoption services provided by qualified service providers. Funding is provided as a lump sum to cover the cost of these services.

4.1 APPLICATION FORM

The submission of the **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION SERVICES** application must be exclusively sent through the EU Survey platform at the following link:

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

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

1. Quotation from the service provider (signed and dated after the opening call date) in English version or translated into English.
2. Activities timeline budget and KPIs: an excel file describing activities timeline, budget and KPIs. Template provided by **PowerUp NetZero**.
3. Declaration of Honour. Template provided by **PowerUp NetZero**, must be signed and dated.
4. SME Financial Viability Self-Check, available at the following link: <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/lfv/lfvSimulation.do>. The generated result must be submitted as part of the requested documentation.

Templates for documents 2 and 3 can be downloaded [here](#).

Please, make sure that all of these documents are 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. Please note that this document is intended as a supporting document to help participants develop their application offline, hence it is not considered eligible as such, if submitted. It is available for download at the Call webpage [here](#).

Only the online application form, duly filled in 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 **PowerUp NetZero** project seeks gender balance, diversity protection and social inclusion. Therefore, applicants to **PowerUp NetZero 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. Information provided under this section will be considered as part of the overall quality of implementation and organisational maturity of the proposal.

4.2 NUMBER OF PROPOSALS PER APPLICANT TO THIS CALL

Each SME or start-up may submit only one application to this call.

In the case of multiple submissions by the same applicant, only the first 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 later by the same applicant will not be considered for evaluation either.

However, within the official application period, an applicant may formally request the removal of a previously submitted proposal. This request must be sent via email to punzservices@mcluster.com, in English, and must be electronically signed by a duly authorised representative of the applicant entity. Once the removal request has been accepted, the previously submitted proposal will be removed from the evaluation process, and the latest proposal submitted within the deadline will be considered.

In addition, if one of the Net-Zero technologies covered by the call has not been addressed by any other submitted proposal, and an applicant has submitted more than one proposal, one of which addresses that uncovered Net-Zero technology, the **PowerUp NetZero** Consortium reserves the right to evaluate only the proposal addressing the uncovered Net-Zero technology, even if it was not the first proposal submitted by that applicant. In such cases, the first proposal submitted by the applicant may be excluded from the evaluation process.

4.3 DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

This **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION SERVICES** will be open for 2 months.

- **Deadline for submission is 30th July 2026 at 17:00 CEST.**

Only proposals submitted before the deadline will be accepted. After the call closure, any requests for additions or changes to received proposals will not be considered.

Applications are evaluated in a competitive manner; submission before the deadline does not imply a first-come, first-served principle.

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

4.4 CONTACT POINT

For any information, please send an email to punzservices@mlcluster.com specifying the topic of the request and the question/doubt/information needed.

Information about the project, its objectives and activities can be found on **PowerUp NetZero** profile at the [European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#) and the [LinkedIn page](#).

5. EVALUATION PROCESS

5.1 PROCEDURE AND TIMELINE

The **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION SERVICES** will be available for 2 months (until 30th July 2026).

Only applications drafted in English and submitted via the link provided in Section 4.1 will be considered eligible.

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

Table 2. Timeline of PowerUp NetZero Open Call for Business Innovation and Technology Adoption Services

Open Call	Date
Publishing date	Tuesday, May 21 st , 2026
Deadlines for submission	30 th July 2026 at 17:00 CEST
Evaluation period	2 months
Communication of results	16 th September 2026
Acknowledgement of the selection outcome and acceptance of funding agreement terms and conditions (by successful applicants) via email to punzservices@mlcluster.com	Within 3 working days after receiving communication of selection, the formal acceptance of the service provider's quotation must be sent via email, in order to receive the agreement to be signed. Thus: by end of September 2026.
Preparation and signature of the agreement	By 23 rd October 2026
Project duration	Maximum 7 months from the signature of the agreement and at the latest by 27 th May 2027
Interim report	Within a maximum of two months from the project start date, by 23 rd December 2026.

Open Call	Date
First (interim) payment	50% of total amount, if “SME Financial Viability Self-Check” (+) fulfils the criteria for triggering this payment. According to the agreement and after approval of the interim report.
Final reporting	by 27 th May 2027
Final payment	50% or 100% of the total amount. The payments will be carried out by MLC, leader of PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION SERVICES and will be done within 60 days (2 months) after receiving the final reporting documents. Thus: Last week of July 2027.

Questions can be asked via email to punzservices@mlcluster.com from the day the call is published until 5 working days before the deadline, meaning until 23rd July 2026.

5.2 SELECTION AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

SMEs or start-ups 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 **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION SERVICES** will be ranked according to the evaluation criteria shown in the table below. Only full points will be awarded, no half points.

Table 3. Evaluation criteria for PowerUp NetZero Open Call for Business Innovation and Technology Adoption Services

Evaluation criteria	Threshold	Max Points
SECTION 1 – Relevance	25	35
Coherence of the proposal with the selected topics proposed by PowerUp NetZero call and contribution derived from the development and/or implementation of NetZero technologies. Description of activities to be carried out.		20
Solutions adequacy of the proposal with the fulfilment of the specific and general objectives of the SME or start-up		15
SECTION 2 – Implementation	17	25
Service provider(s) suitability and quality, in terms of competences and expertise and activities that will be carried out.		10

Evaluation criteria	Threshold	Max Points
Financial assessment of costs necessary to achieve the solution based on real market costs		10
Timeline and organisation of work		5
SECTION 3 – Impact	28	40
Contribution to increase the innovation/ digitalisation/ sustainability generated by the service(s)		20
Contribution to increase the ESG performance level requiring the service(s)		10
Degree of exploitation, transferability of results and replicability of the activities developed		10
TOTAL SCORE	70	100

A minimum **overall score of 70 points** is required to be admitted to the final selection stage. It is foreseen that at least 19 applications will be selected to be supported. The number of SMEs or start-ups supported is indicative and depends on the final ranking and awarded lump-sum amounts.

The evaluation process is presented in **Errore. L'origine riferimento non è stata trovata.** The evaluation phase will start after the submission deadline 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 **PowerUp NetZero** Consortium partners. The applicants will receive an e-mail about the outcome of the eligibility check after it is finalised.

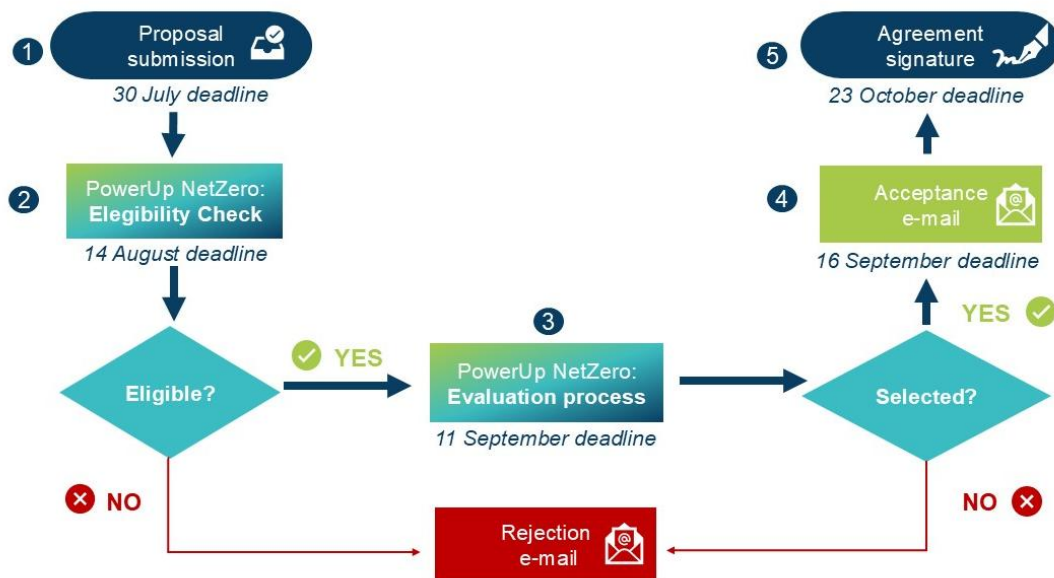


Figure 2 - PowerUp NetZero Open Call for Business Innovation and Technology Adoption Services evaluation stages. This timeline corresponds to 2026.

The applications of eligible SMEs or start-ups, following the eligibility checks, will be evaluated by an Evaluation Panel, consisting of at least 2 representatives of the **PowerUp NetZero** project consortium not belonging to the same country as the one of the applicant, that could ask (if necessary) for the support of external experts, with proven expertise in the topic of the proposal.

The proposals will be evaluated against the evaluation criteria (see section 5.2): 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 differ significantly, a meeting will be organised to present each evaluation and support it with specific comments. 2 more representatives of the **PowerUp NetZero** consortium will also participate to provide an extra opinion about the proposal in question, in case the original representatives of the Evaluation Panel do not manage to find 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 on 16th September 2026. 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 **PowerUp NetZero** consortium to the participant by email as part of the communication of selection, in case the SME or start-up 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 the application at stake will not be funded.

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: Type of service provider: priority to proposals where the selected service provider is an SME.
- 2nd criterion: **PowerUp NetZero** technologies addressed by proposals: priority to Net-Zero Technologies not yet addressed.
- 3rd criterion: Presence of SMEs or start-ups from EU regions different from the countries of individual **PowerUp NetZero** partners
- 4th criterion: Date of submission: first submitted proposals go first.

5.3 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 punzservices@mlcluster.com 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 **PowerUp NetZero** 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.

5.4 COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS AND ACCEPTANCE

Once all proposals are evaluated, **PowerUp NetZero** will send to the SME or start-up 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. In this communication, the selected SMEs will be asked to submit a formal acceptance of their provider's offer and the signed Agreement.

A contract, defined as an "Agreement", will be signed between the leader of **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION SERVICES**, namely the Basque Mobility and Logistics Cluster (MLC) and each selected company, stating all the requirements and conditions to be fulfilled in order to receive the lump-sum.

Failure to submit the required documents within the established timeframe may result in withdrawal of the funding offer.

See also Section 6.

5.5 CONTACT POINT

For any information, please send an email to punzservices@mlcluster.com specifying the topic of the request and the question/doubt/information needed.

Information about the project, its objectives and activities can be found on **PowerUp NetZero** webpage: <https://profile.clustercollaboration.eu/profile/cluster-partnership-initiative/06aeb7f7-6519-429b-a5b0-7e83caf9c3b1>

6. AGREEMENT

6.1 Preparation and signature of the Agreement

Once the beneficiaries have been selected, they will receive the agreement proposed by **PowerUp NetZero** 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 or start-up and the leader of **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION SERVICES**, namely the Basque Mobility and Logistics Cluster (MLC). The agreement will also include all the relevant information related to the company, and about MLC, as well as the principles, obligations², and conditions to be fulfilled by the beneficiaries, 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 **PowerUp NetZero** 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 **PowerUp NetZero** Consortium may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

² Following the requirements of the Grant Agreement signed by the PowerUp NetZero Consortium related to providing financial support to third parties (FSTP).

- **Replacement of the service provider is not permitted:** In the event that the selected service provider is no longer able to deliver the agreed services, changes of service provider are not permitted. In cases of force majeure, the **PowerUp NetZero** Consortium reserves the right to assess the situation and take a decision.
- **Confidentiality and security - Sensitive information:** The beneficiary 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](#). Sensitive information may be used solely for the purposes of implementing the Agreement and may be disclosed only to personnel or third parties strictly involved in the action and bound by confidentiality obligations. The **PowerUp NetZero** 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:** Activities must be carried out in accordance with the highest ethical standards and applicable EU, international, and national legislation. Any specific ethics requirements will be detailed 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.
- **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 **PowerUp NetZero** Consortium in the Agreement (5 years after the end of **PowerUp NetZero** project, i.e.: 31/12/2033) — 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 at least one of the SMEs' or start ups' 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 punzservices@mlcluster.com within 5 working days after its reception. It will then be counter-signed by MLC and a fully signed copy will be sent back via email to the company.

If a beneficiary prefers to sign the contract by hand, this must be notified to MLC 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, the signature of the Agreement implies full acceptance of its terms and conditions.

6.2 PAYMENTS

Up to 20.000,00 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, and according to the “SME Financial Viability Self-Check” result. If needed, further information can be requested to the awarded SMEs by the PowerUp NetZero consortium.

The payments will be processed as follows:

1. **First payment (interim payment)** of 50% of total amount after approval of an interim report. Within a maximum of two months from the project start date, and no later than 23 December, the beneficiary must submit an interim report providing evidence that the project activities have effectively started. The payment of the first instalment (“first payment”) will be carried out by MLC leader of **PowerUp NetZero** Open Call for Business Innovation and Technology Adoption Services, within 60 days (2 months) after the acceptance of the 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 applicant must complete the SME Financial Viability Self-Check (+) during the application phase of the call for proposals. The financial viability assessment will be based on the result of this self-check, using the applicant’s latest approved financial data. Satisfactory financial capacity will be considered to be demonstrated if one of the following thresholds is met:

- **First option:**

[Total amount requested by the Beneficiary / Turnover] ≤ 50%

This means that the company must have a turnover equal to at least twice the amount of financial support requested under the **PowerUp NetZero** Open Call for Business Innovation and Technology Adoption Services.

- **Second option**, only if the first option is not met:

[Total amount requested by the Beneficiary / Capital & reserves] ≤ 50%

This means that the company must have capital and reserves equal to at least twice the amount of financial support requested under the **PowerUp NetZero** Open Call for Business Innovation and Technology Adoption Services.

If neither threshold is met, the proposal may still be selected. However, in such cases, no interim payment will be granted, and the full lump sum will be paid only after approval of the final report.

2. **Final payment of 50% to 100%** of the total awarded amount will be made after completion of the funded activity and will be linked to the approval of the final report. The amount to be paid will correspond to:
 - 50%, if an interim payment has already been made; or
 - 100%, if no interim payment was foreseen.

The payment will be made by MLC, leader of the **PowerUp NetZero** Open Call for Business Innovation and Technology Adoption Services, within 60 days (2 months) from receipt of the final reporting documents, including the duly completed feedback questionnaire on satisfaction with the project support, mandatory for the beneficiary SMEs and Service Providers:

https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/Single_Market_Programme_Feedback_Survey
(to be completed online, printed in pdf and annexed to the final report).

This information, together with the reporting timeline and reporting requirements, will be included in the Agreement to be signed by the beneficiary and MLC, the **PowerUp NetZero** Open Call for Business Innovation and Technology Adoption Services leader.

Further details about timeline and deadlines are available in Section 5.1.

6.2.1 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.
- Lump-sum funding must be used exclusively to achieve the objectives defined in the Agreement, in a transparent manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

PowerUp NetZero 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 **PowerUp NetZero** Open Calls.

6.3 Monitoring and Reporting

As mentioned, in order to receive the lump-sum as set in the agreement, beneficiaries must provide an interim report and 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 **PowerUp NetZero** partners will agree with each beneficiary 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 final report that, when approved, will link to the final payment (50% or 100%).

PowerUp NetZero partners may request additional supporting documents, if deemed necessary, to evaluate the progress.

6.4 COMMUNICATION OBLIGATIONS

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

The **PowerUp NetZero** 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 **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL**, the **PowerUp NetZero** Consortium can communicate several information about proposal awarded, also through its social media (LinkedIn, X, ECCP Page), including:

- Description of the supported activities.
- Beneficiaries’ information: SME or start-up name and country.
- Duration of the activities.

Detailed information will be further gathered throughout the project.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY, IPR AND DATA PROTECTION

7.1 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 **PowerUp NetZero**, therefore displaying the EU and logo on all printed and digital material, including websites and press releases.

7.2 CONFIDENTIALITY AND GDPR DATA PROTECTION

By submitting the application, the company consents that the content of the application form will be shared with **PowerUp NetZero** partners. The privacy policy is available [here](#) as well as linked in the application form.

PowerUp NetZero 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 **PowerUp NetZero**.

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.

8. ANNEX I: SMES AND START-UPS CHECKLIST

In order to submit a complete application to **PowerUp NetZero OPEN CALL FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION SERVICES**, SMEs and start-ups must present the following documentation when filling the application form (which has to be duly filled and submitted online only at this link:

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

- ✓ Quotation from the service provider.
- ✓ Activities timeline, budget and KPIs – based on the available template.
- ✓ Declaration of Honour signed – based on the available template.
- ✓ SME Financial Viability Self-Check available at the following link and submit the generated result: <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/lfv/lfvSimulation.do>

A template of the application form is also 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 and the template documents are available at this [LINK](#)