# CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

## Selection process for Grants

### DISCLAIMER

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# DEFINITIONS

Grant: money awarded as a lump-sum by the FLUIDOS project to successful applicants in order to implement the sub-project detailed in their proposal.

Use Case Grant: a grant that is open to individual entities and consortia of maximum three organisations that will demonstrate the use of the FLUIDOS system in a new domain.

Technology Extension Grant: a grant that is open to individual entities that will create a new functionality or extend an existing functionality of the FLUIDOS system.

Grant Period: the period of time to implement the development outlined in the application, extending to a maximum of 8 months. Funding will only cover activities carried out in this period.

Project Coordinator: Martel, as leader of the FLUIDOS consortium

Open Call Manager: DIGITAL SME, as the organiser of the Open Call application and overseer of the successful implementation of the grants and sub-grant projects

Treasurer: DIGITAL SME will manage the grant funding and will disburse the grant amounts to the sub-grant partners at the specified points.

Sub-grant Project: each successful application will be referred to as a "sub grant project" during the implementation phase.

Sub-grant Project Partner: the applicant (or applicants) attached to each sub grant project -– each technology extension grant will have one sub-grant project partner, and the use case grant will have 2 or 3 partners, depending on the composition in the application.

Sub-grant Consortium: the sub grant project partners that will be implementing a use case grant.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. OVERVIEW OF THE FLUIDOS PROJECT

FLUIDOS is dedicated to the creation of a dynamic, scalable, and secure computing continuum, bridging the gap between edge and cloud computing. Building upon established Operating Systems and orchestration solutions such as Kubernetes, FLUIDOS aims to introduce a new layer of enriched functionality. This layer facilitates resource sharing through innovative advertisement and agreement procedures in the horizontal dimension, while adopting hierarchical aggregation of nodes, inspired by the inter-domain routing principles employed on the Internet, to achieve vertical integration.

At the core of FLUIDOS' vision is intent-based orchestration, which harnesses advanced AI algorithms to optimise costs and energy usage within the continuum. By promoting efficient utilisation of edge resources, FLUIDOS ensures a seamless integration of computing power. The adoption of a Zero-Trust paradigm enables FLUIDOS to securely control and access geographically dispersed resources, while Trusted Platform Modules guarantee the safe deployment of applications and services.

FLUIDOS is guided by the following key objectives:

1. Fluidify the Edge and Unify it with the Cloud: FLUIDOS aims to create a borderless, decentralized continuum that effortlessly combines edge and cloud computing. Through automatic, autonomous resource discovery and integration, this approach ensures a cohesive and cohesive computing environment.

2. Move Gravity Outside Data Centers: By fostering a cross-provider, community-based computing, and service fabric, leveraging open-source software, FLUIDOS reduces the dependency on centralised data centres. This approach encourages a collaborative approach and a more distributed computing landscape.

3. Orchestrate Services and Hyper-Distributed Applications: FLUIDOS endeavours to orchestrate services and hyper-distributed applications seamlessly across multiple devices and domains. Leveraging energy-efficient AI learning algorithms and mobility/behaviour prediction and traffic forecasting training, FLUIDOS ensures optimal performance and resource utilisation.

4. Introduce a Zero-Trust Paradigm: FLUIDOS is committed to establishing a secure and authenticated means of accessing geographically dispersed resources. This Zero-Trust paradigm provides a robust security framework, safeguarding the integrity of the computing continuum.

5. Enable a Multi-Stakeholder Market of Edge Services and Apps: FLUIDOS seeks to nurture the growth of a diverse market for edge services and applications, independent of cloud providers. By fostering European digital autonomy, this approach encourages innovation and diversity within the computing ecosystem.

In conclusion, FLUIDOS' mission is to pave the way for a new era of computing by creating a reliable, efficient, and secure computing continuum. Through its innovative goals, FLUIDOS aims to revolutionise the way computing resources are utilised, forging a path towards a more interconnected and decentralised future. More information is available in the FLUIDOS White Paper, linked in section 4.1.1.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVE AND DOMAINS OF THE OPEN CALLS

The upcoming FLUIDOS Open Calls, scheduled for launch in December 2023, are aimed at European high-tech SMEs, researchers, and innovators. FLUIDOS Open Calls present a unique opportunity for participants to explore the project´s novel mechanisms for data sharing and processing in the computing continuum. Successful applicants will benefit from financial support of up to 120,000 EURO and technical guidance from FLUIDOS experts. Additionally, they will have the chance to enhance their business models' environmental sustainability through minimised energy consumption for data processing.

FLUIDOS, a cutting-edge initiative, will invite European high-tech SMEs, researchers, and innovators to partake in its Open Calls, designed to propel technological advancements and foster environmental consciousness. This section sheds light on the specifics of the Open Calls, outlining its objectives, available funding, and potential areas of exploration.

The FLUIDOS Open Calls aim to achieve the following objectives:

1. Facilitate Technological Advancements: Encouraging applicants to offer additional Open-Source functionalities to be integrated with FLUIDOS, fostering continuous innovation and expansion of the platform's capabilities.
2. Validate FLUIDOS Architecture: Through the FLUIDOS Use Case call, applicants will be invited to test and validate FLUIDOS architecture and software by integrating their own additional software on top of the FLUIDOS system, exploring new sectors beyond environmental monitoring, mobility, healthcare, and security.
3. Promote Environmental Sustainability: Encouraging participants to leverage FLUIDOS' minimised energy consumption for data processing to create business models that are more environmentally sustainable.

FLUIDOS will boost its community, embracing new members in the consortium through its Open Calls.

Specifically, FLUIDOS will offer two different types of grant for applicants:

| FLUIDOS Technology Extension (TEG) | |
|---|---|
| *Purpose* | Offered to applicants that can demonstrate that they are able to offer additional, open source, functionalities to the FLUIDOS platform. |
| *Eligibility* | FLUIDOS TEG will be open to individual entities, including researchers, developers, SMEs, start-ups, large enterprises, innovators, and research institutions. |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Funding* | Selected applicants will have the opportunity to receive financial support of up to 75,000 EURO |

[Table 1: FLUIDOS TEG]

| FLUIDOS Use Case (UCG) | |
|---|---|
| *Purpose* | To test and validate FLUIDOS architecture and software by incorporating their own additional software on top of the FLUIDOS system and exploring new sectors beyond the traditional application domains. |
| *Eligibility* | FLUIDOS UCG will be open to both individual entities (researchers, developers, SMEs, start-ups, large enterprises, innovators, or research institutions) and small consortia of 2-3 entities. |
| *Funding* | Successful applicants will be granted up to 120,000 EURO (per consortia), distributed as the consortia partners see fit. |

[Table 2: FLUIDOS UCG]

## 1.3 TIMELINE

The timeline of FLUIDOS Open Calls can be displayed in the below tables.

Open Call I:

| Months | Activities |
|---|---|
| ● (December 2023) | The first Open Call has to be published for externals to apply. |
| ● (January – February 2024) | The call is running |
| ● (March 2024) | Evaluation, Contract Agreement and Signing |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ● (April 2024) | Start of sub-project grant period | |
| August 2024 | Mid Term Review | |
| ● December 2024 | End of Sub-grant project and Final Review | |

[Table 3: Timeline Open Call 1]

In the first open call, the Technology Extension Grant (TEG) and the Use Case Grant (UCG) will be awarded to a total of 10 selected applicants, specifically 5 recipients for each grant category.

The launch of the First Open Call is set for December 15[th.], 2023.

The second Open Call is scheduled for release in the second half of 2024. During the second open call, the Use Case Grant (UCG) will be bestowed upon a total of 5 eligible applicants.

Both Open Calls are set to last for a duration of 8 months, with the commencement of the actual work occurring 2 months subsequent to the application deadline.

After the Open Calls come to a close, the FLUIDOS project will enter the evaluation and selection phase, which comprises both internal and external evaluations. During the internal evaluation, all submitted proposals will be assessed against specific eligibility criteria (detailed in Section 3). Proposals that do not meet these criteria will be informed of their rejection. The eligible proposals will then proceed to the external evaluation, where they will be reviewed by external evaluators. The highest-ranked proposals will be invited to enter the contract preparation and signature phase. Simultaneously, all other proposals, including those that did not meet the threshold or are on a reserve list, will also receive notifications.

Following the contract preparation, the projects will move into their implementation phase, which is divided into three stages:

   I.   Planning (1 month – indicative)

   II.  Design (4 months – indicative)

   III. Deployment (3 months - indicative)

The above timelines can be adjusted based upon the work programme that each sub-project sets out. A mid-term review will still be carried out to assess progress after month 4, or at another appropriate point based on the sub-project work plan.

# 2. GENERAL INFORMATION

### 2.1 MEANS OF SUBMISSION

Applications for the FLUIDOS Open Calls will be made via the European DIGITAL SME Alliance application platform, available here: https://fluidos.digitalsme.eu/
No other form of application will be accepted.
Applications require the following documents to be completed:
- Application Template
- Declaration of Honour
- SME Declaration of Honour (only if applying as an SME - see section 3.1.1)

### 2.2 LANGUAGE

FLUIDOS Open Calls exclusively accept submissions in English as the official language non-English submissions will be deemed ineligible and will not undergo evaluation. Throughout the entire FLUIDOS program implementation, English remains the sole official language, necessitating that all documentation and deliverables must be in English to qualify.

### 2.3 DOCUMENTATION FORMAT

All requested documentation during the Open Call and subproject implementation phases (submission, evaluation, execution and justification) must be submitted electronically in PDF format, with no restrictions for printing.

### 2.4 DATA PROTECTION

In order to process and assess proposals, FLUIDOS will require the collection of personal and industrial data. Notably, applicants are required to understand and accept the data privacy policy of DIGITAL SME platform. They should be aware that the data collected through this application form will be used by the FLUIDOS consortium partners (See Appendix) solely for managing expressions of interest from applicants. More information can be found in Section 6.2.

### 2.5 ORIGINS OF THE FUNDS

Selected beneficiaries will sign a dedicated Sub-Grant Agreement with the FLUIDOS consortium. The funds attached to the Sub-Grant Agreement come directly from the funds of the European Project FLUIDOS, and are being managed and distributed by the coordinator of the Open Call, the European DIGITAL SME Alliance, according to the Grant Agreement № 101070473 signed with the European Commission.

As can be seen in the Sub-Grant Agreement template, this relation between the beneficiaries and the European Commission through the FLUIDOS project carries a set of obligations to the sub-grantees with the European Commission and the Project Coordinator and Open Call Coordinator. It is the task of the beneficiaries to accomplish them, and of the FLUIDOS consortium partners to inform about them.

# 3 PROPOSAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The FLUIDOS project welcomes organisations that are actively involved in the technology and technology integration field to come together and create a consortium. They are encouraged to submit their proposals for innovative sub-projects, providing them with an opportunity to enhance their technical and business skills through FLUIDOS. The proposals should focus on the domain of edge-to-cloud computing continuum or its related sub-domains, including but not limited to:

- ○ Edge Computing
- ○ Distributed Systems and Orchestration
- ○ AI and Machine Learning Algorithms
- ○ Security and Zero Trust Architecture
- ○ Open-Source Software and Community Collaboration

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Participation in FLUIDOS Open Calls requires that the different criteria be met, listed in the sections below.

## 3.1 BENEFICIARIES´ ELIGIBILITY

FLUIDOS Technological Extension (TEG) call will be open to individual entities. This includes:

- researchers,
- developers,
- SMEs,
- start-ups,
- large enterprises,
- innovators, and
- research institutions

The FLUIDOS Use Case (UCG) call will provide funding to both individual entities (such as researchers, developers, SMEs, start-ups, large enterprises, innovators, or research institutions) and small consortia. These consortia, comprising 2-3 entities, must include at least one (1) SME and one (1) industrial partner.

Eligible proposals from consortia of SMEs and industrial partners will be accepted as long as they meet the criteria for EC funding under the Horizon Europe participation rules[1] [2].

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[1] https://rea.ec.europa.eu/horizon-europe-who-should-apply_en#:~:text=Any%20type%20of%20organisation%20can,different%20EU%20or%20associated%20countries.

[2] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2021-2022/wp-13-general-annexes_horizon-2021-2022_en.pdf

In summary, a consortium will be deemed eligible if it satisfies the following conditions:

- All consortium partners are legal entities established and operating in one of the EU Member States or an Horizon Europe Associated country, as defined in the Horizon Europe rules for participation.[3]
- The consortium includes an SME (specific requirements can be found in sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2) and includes an industrial partner.
- The consortium comprises a minimum of two (2) partners and a maximum of three (3) partners.

### 3.1.1 Definition of SME

To be classified as an SME, the company must meet the criteria outlined in the European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC[4] and the SME user guide.[5] These criteria are summarised as follows:

1. The SME should be independent, meaning it is not affiliated or under the ownership of another enterprise that does not meet the SME critieria, in accordance with Recommendation 2003/361/EC.
2. The company's headcount, measured in Annual Work Units (AWU), should be less than 250.
3. The annual turnover of an SME should be equal to or less than €50 million, or its annual balance sheet total should be less than or equal to €43 million.

### 3.1.2 SME eligibility criteria

An SME is considered eligible for FLUIDOS open call if it complies will ALL the following rules:

A. It is a legal entity established and based in one of the EU Member States or an Horizon Europe Associated country as defined in Horizon Europe rules for participation[6]
B. It is a technology provider or technology adopter/user or integrator.
C. Start-ups that do not have yet annual turnover or balance sheets are also considered eligible given that they fulfil the criteria (1) and (2) of section 3.1.1 at submission time.
D. In case an SME is awarded a sub-project, it will remain eligible even if, at a certain point during the sub-project execution, it does not fulfil criteria (2) or (3) of section 3.1.1

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[3]https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

[4] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:124:0036:0041:en:PDF

[5] http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme_definition/sme_user_guide_en.pdf

[6] Association to Horizon Europe is governed by the Horizon Europe Regulation (EU) 2021/695. The list of associated countries is available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

SME applicants will be required to state their compatibility with the SME criteria stated above via an SME Declaration. Without this confirmation, applicants will not be eligible to be considered for the SME role within the grants.

Only applicants legally established, and working, in the case of the individuals, in any of the following countries will be eligible:

- The Member States (MS) of the European Union (EU), including their outermost regions.
- The Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) linked to the Member States. Entities from OCTs are eligible for funding under the same conditions as entities from the Member States to which the OCT in question is linked.
- Horizon Europe Associated countries:  according to the updated list published by the EC.[7]

### 3.2 PROPOSAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

FLUIDOS emphasises the importance of transparency and integrity in grant applications. As such, it is imperative that applicants adhere to the policy of not seeking simultaneous funding for identical or substantially similar projects through the project Open Calls.

**Notably, the following proposals eligibility criteria apply:**

1. Proposals must have a clear European dimension, facilitate cutting-edge mechanisms for data sharing and processing and contribute towards European Union digitization, targeting clear economic and societal impact.
2. Each applicant may submit only one (1) proposal per Open Call and grant category. Multiple submissions per call is a disqualifying factor. In case an SME submits more than one proposal per open call, all proposals that they have submitted will be automatically excluded from the evaluation process.
3. Applicants may participate in a maximum of one (1) accepted sub-project category. Applicants that are selected for a Use Case Grant in the first Open Call are not eligible for funding in Open Call #2, even if they submit a new proposal.
4. Applicants are permitted to resubmit a proposal for a different grant during Open Call #2. This is the case of the applicants who have been selected for a Technical Extension Grant in the initial Open Call and who may qualify for a Use Case Grant in the subsequent Open Call.
5. Applicants may re-submit at Open Call #2 a proposal that was not selected for funding during Open Call #1. However, it is mandatory to flag that this is a resubmission and clearly explain the improvements that they have made.

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[7] <u>European Union member states (EU27):</u> Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. <u>Countries associated with Horizon Europe:</u> Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom and Ukraine.

## 3.3 FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY

Each individual may receive a maximum of €75.000 under FLUIDOS TEG, while each individual applicant or small consortium may receive up to €120,000 under FLUIDOS UCG.

# 4 OPEN CALL: SUBMISSION, SELECTION AND EVALUATION PROPOSAL

FLUIDOS will issue two Open Calls. Tables 3 and 4 summarise the FLUIDOS Open Call timeline.

## 4.1 PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

FLUIDOS Open Call submission process will follow the steps that are listed in following sections.

### 4.1.1 Open call publication

**Each open call will be published on the dates shown in section 1.6. Each open call will be supported by:**

- FLUIDOS White Paper (PDF), detailing the architecture of the FLUIDOS platform.
- Guidelines for Applicants, the present document.
- Proposal Template (Annex 1) (docx), an online application form, available online
- Honour Declaration (Annex 4) (docx) which declares that all conditions of the Open Call are accepted by a legal representative of the participating organisation.
- SME Declaration (Annex 5) (docx), which evaluates the status of the SMEs participating at an open call.
- Sub-grant Agreement Template (Annex 2) (docx), which provides a template of the sub-grant agreement thaSME Declaration (Annex 6), which evaluates the status of the SMEs participating at an open call.t the successful applicants will be requested to sign.
- Bank account information (Annex 3) (docx), which collects information on the applicant(s)' bank account where the FLUIDOS payments will be sent to.
- Frequently Asked Questions & answers published at the community feed.

### 4.1.2 Applicants Registration

Interested applicants should register on DIGITAL SME Platform. This will be the central interface for managing the proposal applications for the remainder of the open calls.

### 4.1.3 Proposal Preparation

Please follow the steps:

1. For the proposal preparation, the applicants are requested to apply online and answer to all mandatory questions (with no exception)
2. Applicants that do not accept the terms and conditions and do not sign and upload to the application platform the completed Honour Declaration and SME Declaration (if required) will not be eligible.
3. Be concrete and concise. Questions have character limitations. Please examine all the open call documents and attend the various online and physical events promoted by FLUIDOS project.
4. It is highly recommended to submit your proposal well before the deadline. If the applicant discovers an error in the proposal, and provided the call deadline has not passed, the applicant

may request to re-submit the proposal (for this purpose please contact us at opencall@fluidos.eu. However, FLUIDOS is not committed that resubmission in time will be feasible in case the request for resubmission is not received by the DIGITAL SME team at least 48 hours before the call deadline.

It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the proposal. Failure of the proposal to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays or working from multiple browsers or multiple browser windows, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the application as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

### 4.1.4 FLUIDOS Champions

Members of the FLUIDOS consortium will be acting as Champions for their domains within the FLUIDOS development and are available as an advisory resource for proposal preparation. Each champion will be available to offer comments on a first draft of the proposal, in order to be able to check the suitability and relevance of the proposals. In order to benefit from this championing, the champions commit to return the proposals after a maximum of one week. For any issues, contact DIGITAL SME for resolution.

### 4.1.5 Proposals reception

Submissions will be done ONLY via the proper platform on https://fluidos.digitalsme.eu/. A full list of proposers will be drafted containing their basic information for statistical purposes and clarity (which will be also shared with EC for transparency).

The application reception will close at 17:00 CET (Brussels time) on 29th February 2024. There will not be any deadline extensions unless there are extreme circumstances, such as the system being unavailable.

### 4.2 PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND SELECTION

FLUIDOS Priority Topics and Domains of Interest

As part of the development of the FLUIDOS, several areas and domains have been identified as priorities for the Open Calls. Applications addressing the following areas will be awarded bonus points in the evaluation:

Technology Extension Grants (TEG):

- Privacy preserving Node Telemetry: algorithms and technologies that can inform customers of activity within the FLUIDOS domain without disclosing sensitive information from the hosting domain (e.g., physical topology), while still allowing customers to infer how their services are performing.
- Extension of the REAR protocol for generic resource negotiation and acquisition, such as VMs from a cloud hyperscaler and/or broader standardisation (e.g., within the GSMa).
- Integration of authorisation/accounting features with the frameworks proposed for GaiaX, (e.g., clearing houses, federated deployments etc.)
- Exporting data centre information about energy/carbon footprint to enable global energy/carbon-based optimization strategies.

Use Cases Grants (UCG)

- A consumer-oriented integrated management suite for FLUIDOS that exposes a functionally capable UI and API (This shall allow for the complete management of FLUIDOS nodes and domains.)
- Enabling a scalable FLUIDOS-based orchestrator to control and update a large swarm of IoT devices.

Altogether, is it safe to state that the upcoming FLUIDOS Open Call marks a pivotal moment for European high-tech SMEs, researchers, and innovators, offering a golden opportunity to leverage FLUIDOS' cutting-edge mechanisms for data sharing and processing. The Open Call, launching in December 2023, aims to foster technological advancements, promote environmental sustainability, and propel the FLUIDOS platform to new heights of innovation and impact.

Evaluation of each proposal will be undertaken by two external experts and one technical expert from the project , who will have been allocated to review a number of proposals after having confirmed that they have no conflict of interests with the applicant.

A conflict of interest check will be performed by extracting information from each proposal, such as company name, sector and other relevant data (not content related) and sharing these with the relevant evaluator, who will then confirm they do not have any conflict of interest. If they do declare a conflict of interest, the application will be reassigned.

Project partners will not score the proposals in the same manner as the external evaluators; rather, they will undertake a compatibility check to ensure that the sub-project proposals are technically feasible with regard to the FLUIDOS platform. This compatibility check may also be carried out through the "FLUIDOS Champion" service for applicants.

Table 4 FLUIDOS Open Call #1 evaluation criteria

| Criteria | Description |
|---|---|
| **Criterion 1 \| PROBLEM-SOLVING EXCELLENCE INDEX** Weight: 30% | <ul><li>Design, Reliability, Feasibility, and Novelty of the Proposed Solution:<ul><li>This criterion focuses on assessing the integrity of the proposed solution concerning its design, reliability, feasibility, and innovative aspects. It scrutinises how effectively the solution tackles the identified problem.</li></ul></li><li>Quality and Feasibility of the Proposed Technical Approach:<ul><li>This criterion evaluates the robustness and practicality of the technical approach put forward. It examines the viability and suitability of the proposed methods and technologies.</li></ul></li><li>Soundness of the Approach and Credibility:<ul><li>This criterion analyses the credibility and reliability of the proposed approach. It scrutinises the foundation, logic, and expertise underpinning the proposed solution.</li></ul></li><li>Level of Innovation and Technological Readiness:<ul><li>This criterion gauges the innovative nature of the solution and its readiness in terms of technological</li></ul></li></ul> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | advancement at the time of application. It assesses how pioneering and advanced the proposed solution is in addressing the challenges.<br>● Alignment with the FLUIDOS Project and Architecture:<br>  ○ This criterion evaluates the degree of compatibility and synergy between the proposed solution and the FLUIDOS project's overarching goals and architectural framework. It assesses how well the proposal integrates with the existing structure and objectives of the project. |
| **Criterion 2 \| IMPACT**<br>**Weight: 35%** | To meet the impact criteria, it is required to address at least <u>two out of the three</u> expected impacts outlined:<br><br>● Impact 1: Tangible FLUIDOS Application Expansion Explanation:<br>  ○ Measures demonstrable enhancements and extensions to FLUIDOS, reflecting measurable improvements or additions to the application's functionality and features.<br>● Impact 2: Open Source Contributions<br>  ○ Explanation: Evaluates active engagement and valuable contributions to open-source projects, including code submissions, bug fixes, or documentation enhancements, fostering collaborative development.<br>● Impact 3: Use Case Relevance<br>  ○ Explanation: Assesses the practical applicability of developed solutions to address real-world challenges, emphasising the significance and utility of the implemented changes within relevant contexts. |

| Criterion 3 \| CONSORTIUM/ORGANISATION<br>Weight: 15% | <ul><li>Introduction of Team:<ul><li>This information assists in gauging the competences, knowledge, and technical capacity of the applicant/consortium, including relevant complementarities.</li></ul></li><li>Motivation of the Team:<ul><li>A motivated team is more likely to remain engaged and resilient throughout the implementation phase.</li></ul></li><li>Coordinator or Contact Person within the Team:<ul><li>Identifying the primary contact person or coordinator within the team enhances communication efficiency and ensures a centralised point of contact for seamless collaboration, which is pivotal for successful implementation.</li></ul></li><li>Overview of the roles and completeness of the consortium.<ul><li>Understanding the diverse skill sets and expertise within the team aids in assessing their collective ability to address challenges, contribute varied perspectives, and ultimately enhance the project's implementation success.</li></ul></li><li>Gender Balance within the Team</li></ul>Ensuring gender balance demonstrates an inclusive approach, contributing positively to the team's dynamics and overall effectiveness in implementing the project. |
| Criterion 4 \| RESOURCES AND COSTS<br>Weight: 10% | <ul><li>Allocation and justification of resources to the sub-project implementation:<ul><li>FLUIDOS grants are awarded on the basis of anticipated results, not on the basis of administrative or financial documents such as timesheets. Therefore this criteria evaluates how well the expected PMs match against the work plan set out in criteria 5 and whether the organisation has sufficient capacity to undertake the work plan.</li></ul></li><li>Demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of assigned resources for proposed milestones:<ul><li>If equipment costs are included, they are deemed reasonable and appropriate to the work plan.</li></ul></li><li>Distribution of resources among consortium partners for UCG grants:<ul><li>Equitable distribution fosters collaboration, leverages partner strengths, promotes fair contribution, and ensures compliance with grant regulations, enabling future funding opportunities. If distribution is uneven, it fairly reflects the expected contribution from each sub-project partner.</li></ul></li></ul> |

| Criterion 5 \| WORK PLAN Weight: 10% | ● Project Plan with Milestones and Verification Methods: <br> ○ A structured project plan with milestones and verification methods is essential to ensure clear direction, manage tasks effectively, and maintain quality standards throughout the project. <br> ● Establishing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Project Achievement: <br> ○ Establishing KPIs is crucial as they provide measurable benchmarks, aid in tracking progress objectively, and enable informed decision-making, fostering continuous improvement and accountability within the project. <br><br> ● Quality and Feasibility of the Proposed Work Plan: <br> ○ This criterion assesses the effectiveness and practicality of the outlined work plan, including proposed milestones. It scrutinises the coherence, achievability, and thoroughness of the planned activities. |
|---|---|

Each criterion will be scored between 1 and 10. Half point scores are not given. For each criterion under examination, score values will indicate the following assessments:

- 1 – 2 / Poor: The sub-project proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be judged due to incomplete or missing information.
- 3 – 4 / Fair: The sub-project proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
- 5 – 6 / Good: The sub-project proposal addresses the criterion well, but several shortcomings are present and minor weaknesses would need correcting.
- 7 – 8 / Very Good: The sub-project proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present and specific improvements are possible.
- 9 – 10 / Excellent: The sub-project proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

The threshold for each criterion is five (5). The overall score threshold is 25. This indicates that if a proposal scores less than 5 in any criterion or an overall score less than 25, the proposal is automatically rejected. Any proposal scoring 1-2 on any of the criteria will automatically be disqualified. Once this initial score has been calculated, the final score will be calculated by adjusting the criteria score by the weighting to obtain the final overall score on a scale of 1 to 10.

Proposals that successfully address the priority areas identified in Section 1.2.1 will be awarded an extra 1 bonus point to their final score.

Each evaluator will record his/her individual assessment of each proposal using an Individual Evaluation Report (IER). The evaluators will then hold a consensus meeting to prepare a single consensus Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) for each proposal, representing opinions and scores on which the evaluators agree and which they will sign. A member of the FLUIDOS Open Call Management Board (OCMB) will support this process.

### 4.2.1 Ranking of proposals

At the end of the evaluation process, all proposals will be ranked in a single list. The criteria for the ranking of the proposals will be semi-automatic following the rules below:

- Rule 1: The proposals will be ranked based on their overall score (summary of criterion 1 to 5 and the bonus points).
- Rule 2: After applying Rule 1, if there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that address the priority areas.
- Rule 3: After applying Rule 2 and if there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have the highest score on **Criterion 2 – Impact**.
- Rule 4: After applying Rule 3 and if there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have the highest score on **Criterion 1 – Problem- solving excellence index.**
- Rule 5: After applying Rule 4 and if there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have the highest score on **Criterion 3 – Consortium**.
- Rule 6: After applying Rule 5 and if there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to those with a share of women and men in the consortium that is closer to 50/50[1].

In case there are still more than 5 proposals in the same position after applying Rule 6, the FLUIDOS OCMB will invite one (1) additional evaluator to read the specific proposals and break the tie by re-evaluating them. Additional proposals will be kept in a reserve list.

The FLUIDOS OCMB reserves the right to organise additional interviews with selected applicants to clarify questions regarding submitted proposals and to support in the evaluation process.

### 4.2.2 Redress process

Within three (3) working days of receiving (1) a rejection letter informing the proposal as non-eligible or (2) an ESR, an applicant may submit a request for redress if s/he believes the results of the eligibility checks have not been correctly applied, or if s/he feels that there has been a shortcoming in the way his/her proposal has been evaluated that may affect the final decision on whether to enter the FLUIDOS programme.

In such a case, the FLUIDOS OCMB will examine the proposer's request for redress. The OCMB's role is to ensure a coherent interpretation of such requests, and equal treatment of applicants. Requests for redress must be:

- Related to the evaluation process or eligibility checks.
- Clearly describe the complaint.
- Received within the time limit (three (3) working days) from the reception of (1) a rejection letter considering the proposal as non-eligible or (2) the ESR information letter.
- Sent by the entity's legal representative that has also submitted the proposal.

The OCMB will review the complaint and will recommend an appropriate course of action. If there is clear evidence of a shortcoming that could affect the eventual funding decision, it is possible that all or part of the proposal will be re-evaluated. Please note:

- This procedure is concerned only with the evaluation and/or eligibility checking process. The OCMB will not question the scientific or technical judgement of the expert evaluators.
- A re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that affects the final decision on whether to fund the proposal or not. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if a proposal has failed anyway on other criteria.

- The evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. It may be lower than the original score.

Only one request for redress per proposal will be considered by the OCMB. All requests for redress will be treated in confidence and must be sent to the FLUIDOS Coordinator via the proper platform.

### 4.3 SUB – PROJECT NEGOTIATION

All proposals will receive an acceptance or rejection letter together with an anonymised version of their proposal Consensus Evaluation Report.

### 4.3.1 Contract preparation and negotiation

After the external evaluation phase is concluded and the sub-projects are selected, the FLUIDOS consortium will start the contract preparation phase in collaboration with the coordinators of the sub-projects that have been awarded.

Contract preparation will run through an administrative and financial check (and potentially into technical or ethical/security negotiations) based on evaluators' comments. Depending on the contract preparation of each sub-project, a phone call or teleconference may be required and organised to clarify and pending questions.

The objective of the contract preparation is to fulfil the legal requirements between the FLUIDOS consortium and each beneficiary of the open call. The items covered will be:

- Inclusion of the comments (if any) of the proposal's ESR into the workplan and sub-grant agreement (contract).
- Validation of the status information of the SME, where the following documents will be required:
- SMEs Declaration signed. In the event the applicant declares being non-autonomous, the balance sheet and profit and loss account (with annexes) for the last period for upstream and downstream organisations should also be provided.
- Legal existence. Company Register, Official Gazette or other official document per country showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number and a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent).
- In cases where the number of employees and/or the ownership is not clearly identified: any other supporting documents which demonstrate headcount and ownership such as payroll details, annual reports, national regional association records, etc. In case it is a start-up, legal document of the official founding date and declaration of ownership.
- Bank account information: The account where the funds will be transferred will be indicated via a form signed by the main Beneficiary's legal representative and the bank representative. The account should be a business bank account of the Beneficiary.

Failure to provide a valid VAT number will automatically result in exclusion from the contract preparation.

The request of the above listed documentation by the FLUIDOS consortium will be sent to the sub-project representatives, including deadlines by which information and documentation should be sent. In general, the sub-project negotiation should be concluded within 2 weeks. An additional week may be provided by the FLUIDOS coordinator in case of a relevant reasoning. In case negotiations have not been concluded within the above period, the proposal is automatically rejected and the next proposal in the reserve list is invited to initiate the contract preparation.

The contract preparation also implies the confirmation of the timeline, milestones and KPIs set out in the sub-project application and commits the sub-project partner or consortium to achieve them.

### 4.3.2 Contract signature

At the end of the contract preparation and negotiation phase, the sub-grant agreement will be signed between the FLUIDOS consortium represented by its coordinator MARTEL, DIGITAL SME acting as the treasurer and Open Call Manager, and the Beneficiary in representation of the Contracting Parties. The contract must be sent to the following e-mail address: administrative@fluidos.eu.

The sub-grant agreement/ contract will cover the three (3) stages of the sub-project, which will include the following payments and mandatory reports associated with each stage.

Open Call 1:

| Stage | Tentative schedule | Requirements | Payment (of total budget) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Stage 1 Planning | April 2024 | Work programme, detailed timeline, and allocation of resources (as set out in application proposal). | 10% pre-financing + 40% pre-financing upon validation of timeline |
| Stage 2 Implementation | May 2024 - September 2024 (indicative) | Mid Term Review of the sub-project | No payment anticipated |
| Stage 3 Deployment | October 2024 - December 2024 (indicative) | Final Demonstration of the sub-project outcome and deliverables | 50% |

Table 5: Timeline for Open Call 1

The first payment will be disbursed following the signing of the sub-grant agreement, which will establish and agree upon the work programme and timeline for delivery of the sub-grant project activities (attached as annexes from the application).

The final payment will be disbursed pending the successful achievement of the milestones and KPIs defined in the sub-project grant agreement and detailed in the associated report (deliverable), which must be submitted to the FLUIDOS OCMB for review and evaluation.

# 5 IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING

After the finalisation and signing of the sub-grant agreement, the awarded sub-projects will move into the implementation phase. Each sub-project will run for up to eight months. At the end of each stage, the sub-project consortium is expected to produce a deliverable with the results of the work carried out.

These deliverables will be sent to the Open Call Manager and Project Coordinator, and shared with a relevant technical partner to assess the sub-grant project process against the defined milestones and KPIs. If necessary, corrective actions will be proposed.

The grant period may not exceed 8 months, but each sub-grant project is able to define their own internal milestones and will agree with the Open Call Manager and Project Coordinator when to deliver the Mid-Term Report.

Participation in the FLUIDOS Open Call also commits the beneficiary to participate in at least one online dissemination event on the topic of the sub-project grants. These events will be organised to disseminate the results of the project and the success stories from the grants. If participation is not possible and no replacement can be found, video interventions are permitted.

# 6. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BENEFICIARIES

The selected entities are indirectly beneficiaries of European Commission funding. Therefore, they are responsible for the appropriate use of the funding and must comply with obligations under Horizon Europe specific requirements as described in the Horizon Europe programme grant agreement. The obligations that are applicable to the recipients are included in the sub-grant agreement.

## 6.1 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The beneficiaries must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the sub-project is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

They must formally notify the FLUIDOS 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 FLUIDOS coordinator will verify if the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specific deadline.

If the sub-contract consortium member breaches any of its obligations, the sub-contract may be automatically terminated. Moreover, costs may be rejected.

## 6.2 DATA PROTECTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

By submitting their application for the FLUIDOS open call program, participants need to acknowledge and agree to the following principles.

First and foremost, regarding acceptance of data privacy policies: Participants are required to understand and accept the data privacy policy of DIGITAL SME platform. They should be aware that the data collected through this application form will be used by the FLUIDOS consortium partners (See Appendix) solely for managing expressions of interest from experts.

Secondly, during implementation of the sub-project, the parties must keep confidential any data, documents, or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential at sub-contract signing time ('confidential information').
If a beneficiary requests it, the EC and the FLUIDOS consortium may agree to keep selected information confidential for an additional period beyond the initial four years. This will be explicitly stated in the sub-contract.

If information has been identified as confidential during the sub-project implementation or only verbally, it will be confidential only if this is accepted by the FLUIDOS coordinator and confirmed in writing within 15 days of the verbal disclosure. Unless otherwise agreed between the parties, they may use confidential information only to implement the agreement.

The sub-project consortium may disclose confidential information to the FLUIDOS consortium and to the selected reviewers, who will be bound by a specific Non-Disclosure Agreement.

## 6.3 FINANCIAL AUDIT

The EC will oversee the compliance of FLUIDOS' beneficiaries and the beneficiary SME with the conditions outlined in Annex 2 - the Sub-grant agreement for financial support to third parties.

Moreover, the EC may at any time during the implementation of the FLUIDOS project and up to 5 (five) years after the end of the FLUIDOS project, arrange for financial audits to be carried out, by external auditors, or by the EC services themselves including the European Anti-Fraud office (OLAF). The audit procedure shall be deemed to be initiated on the date of receipt of the relevant letter sent by the EC. Such audits may cover financial, systemic, and other aspects (such as accounting and management principles) relating to the proper execution of the grant agreement. They shall be carried out on a confidential basis.

The beneficiary shall make available directly to the EC all detailed information and data that may be requested by the EC or any representative authorised by it, with a view of verifying that the grant agreement is properly managed and performed in accordance with its provisions and that costs have been charged in compliance with it. This information and data must be precise and complete.

The beneficiary shall keep all sub-project deliverables and the originals or, in exceptional cases, duly authenticated copies – including electronic copies – of all documents relating to the sub-project contract for up to five years from the end of the project. These shall be made available to the EC when requested during any audit under the grant agreement.

To carry out these audits, the beneficiary shall ensure that the EC´s services and any external body(ies) authorised by it have on-the-spot access at all reasonable times, notably to the sub-project applicant offices, to its computer data, to its accounting data and to all the information needed to carry out those audits, including information on individual salaries of persons involved in the sub-project. They shall ensure that the information is readily available during the audit and, if so requested, that data be handed over in an appropriate form.

Based on the findings made during the financial audit, a provisional report shall be drawn up. It shall be sent by the EC or its authorised representative to the beneficiary concerned, which may provide observations thereon within one month of receiving it. The EC may decide not to consider observations conveyed or documents sent after that deadline. The final report shall be sent to the beneficiary within two months of expiry of the aforesaid deadline.

Based on the conclusions of the audit, the EC shall take all appropriate measures that it considers necessary, including the issuing of recovery orders regarding all or part of the payments made by it and the application of any applicable sanction.

The European Court of Auditors shall have the same rights as the EC, notably right of access, for the purpose of checks and audits, without prejudice to its own rules.

In addition, the EC may carry out on-the-spot checks and inspections in accordance with Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/96 of 11 November 1996 concerning on-the-spot checks and inspections carried out by the EC to protect the European Communities' financial interests against fraud and other irregularities.

### 6.4 SUB-PROJECT COMMUNICATION

Each sub-project deliverable is associated with a specific payment. This payment will be explicitly referred to in the sub-grant agreement and will include the total amount that each third party of the sub-project consortium will receive.

The payment from the FLUIDOS project to the sub-project will take place via the sub-project consortium leader. FLUIDOS has no other obligation to ensure or monitor that funding has been distributed to the other contracting parties. The sub-project leader is responsible for distributing the

funding to the other contracting parties based on the sub-grant agreement that has been signed and the funding distribution per deliverable and partner.

As such, the sub-project contracting partners should submit with their proposal "Annex 4 – Declaration of Honour", showing that a relevant consortium agreement has been signed, where:

- The sub-project leader ensures the financial viability of each sub-project partner.
- Each sub-project partner authorises the sub-project leader to act on its behalf.
- Each sub-project partner authorises the sub-project leader to receive the sub-project funding from the FLUIDOS coordinator and to distribute it according to the sub-grant agreement.
- A decision-making procedure and conflict resolution schema among the consortium members is defined.
- A proper IPR protection of the sub-project consortium members is ensured.

## 6.5 SUB-PROJECT COMMUNICATION

The sub-project's official representative should:

- Provide any notice in writing to the FLUIDOS Coordinator and Open Call Manager.
- Notify immediately of any change of persons or contact details to the FLUIDOS coordinator Open Call Manager. The address list shall be accessible to all concerned.

## 6.6 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

Intellectual Property Rights regarding technological developments will be agreed through the sub-grant agreements that each sub-project will sign. In principle, any background information or software that is brought to the sub-project by the sub-project partners will remain their intellectual property; and integration or new deployment based upon the FLUIDOS system and architecture resulting in a new application will be considered shared ownership if this is agreed upon in the relevant IPR meetings that the project will hold.

This will be further discussed and agreed in dedicated workshops organised by the FLUIDOS project and confirmed in relevant project deliverables, which can extend their scope to cover the outcomes of the Open Calls.

# 7. CHECKLIST

1. **Does your sub-project proposal and respective planned work fit the call for proposals?**

   *Check that your proposed work is aligned with FLUIDOS Open Call.*

2. **Does your proposal address the main topic and one or more of the sub-domains related to the project ?**

   *Check that your proposed work does indeed address the proposed topics, as defined in Section 3.1.2*

3. **Is your proposal eligible?**

   *Check that you meet all the eligibility criteria presented in section 3, including applicant/ consortium, proposal, and financial eligibility. Make sure that you satisfy the minimum participation requirements (entities from eligible countries).*

4. **Is your proposal complete?**

   *Have you completed all the mandatory questions? Check that all proposal form fields are filled.*

5. **Does your proposal fulfil all questions requests/comments?**

   *Proposals should be precise, concise and must answer to requested questions, which are designed to correspond to the applied evaluation. Omitting requested information will almost certainly lead to lower scores and possible rejection.*

6. **Have you maximised your chances?**

   *Expect competition in the open call. Therefore, edit your proposal tightly, strengthen or eliminate weak points.*

7. **Have you submitted your proposal before the deadline?**

   *It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the proposal. Failure of the proposal to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the message as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.*

8. **Have you provided the necessary annexes?**
9. **Do you need further advice and support?**


 **Important note: Do not forget that applicants must have a valid VAT number during**

 **contract preparation.**

# 8. RELEVANT CONTACTS

The FLUIDOS consortium will organise webinars on the open call to provide participants with a detailed overview of the open call requirements and other relevant information.

The FLUIDOS consortium will provide information to the applicants exclusively via the website, so that all information (questions and answers) will be accessible to all potential applicants.

No binding information will be provided via any other means (e.g., telephone or email).

- More info at: https://www.fluidos.eu/fluidos-open-call/

- FLUIDOS White Paper. (PDF)
- Proposal Template (Annex 1) (docx)
- Honour Declaration (Annex 4) (docx)
- SME Declaration (Annex 5) (docx)
- Sub-grant Agreement Template (Annex 2) (docx)
- Bank account information (Annex 3) (docx)
- Frequently Asked Questions & answers published at the community feed.