



# FUTURAL

Empowering the **FUT**ure through innovative Smart  
Solutions for **rUR**AL areas

**Open Call for co-creating SS with rural communities**

**Open Call text (Fiche)**



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**

## 1. Introduction

This document provides guidance information regarding the FUTURAL Open Call, describing the eligibility and evaluation criteria. The document in its entirety and all associated documents of the Open Call kit must be read carefully before the submission of an application.

### 1.1 About FUTURAL

FUTURAL aims to deliver a set of digital Smart Solutions (SS) under 5 Smart Solution domains<sup>1</sup> to address pressing social and environmental challenges. An integrated metasearch platform providing a one-stop shop for SS will be the gateway to FUTURAL's solutions, enabling search and access to SS developed by similar initiatives. FUTURAL will prototype, test, pilot and demonstrate community-led social, technological and business innovations based on the proposed SS in six rural pilot areas in the EU, representing different geographical and socio-cultural contexts.

An interdisciplinary consortium of partners and a multi-actor approach will pave a coherent path towards the FUTURAL innovations through joint actions and governance systems. FUTURAL will engage rural communities and pursue public-private interactions to develop new social practices that enable market adoption and widespread social change. A clearly outlined networking, EU-wide Rural Innovation Forum (EU-RIF), building on links with key organisations, networks, projects and initiatives within the European rural development ecosystem will also be developed.

The project's Open Call will fund projects that will develop their own SS, based on the five FUTURAL SS domains, to be applied in other rural areas and be available on the project's metasearch platform. A vibrant and sustainable ecosystem will be created around FUTURAL to maximise the impact of the project. The broad application of the project innovations will be enabled through the creation of business models tailored to the needs of different rural contexts and social groups. Policy recommendations and governance frameworks will be co-created in multi-actor workshops in the project's EU-RIF to support, among others, the European Green Deal, the European Digital Strategy, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the EU's long-term vision for rural areas.

### 1.2 FUTURAL Open Call

In FUTURAL, additional projects will be funded to develop their own digital SS for the 5 domains. An Open Call (OC) will be launched to encourage SMEs, startups, research organisations and rural communities to develop and implement their own SS within the 5 FUTURAL domains, thus increasing the number of SS available to rural communities. All SS will be accessible through the FUTURAL Metasearch Platform that will serve as a 'one-stop-shop' for digital rural SS.

The FUTURAL Open Call aims to:

- Address a wider range of societal and environmental challenges related to the 5 FUTURAL domains.
- Harness the potential of using data from multiple sources and make users themselves part of the solution.
- Enable the transferability and accelerate the uptake and upscale of the digital smart solutions at a pan-European level towards sustainable and resilient rural areas.

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<sup>1</sup> The 5 domains are: 1. Circular Bioeconomy, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management; 2. Climate Adaptation and Mitigation; 3. Resilience to Shocks; 4. Citizen Engagement and Quality of Life; and 5. Lifelong Education and Training.

- Enhance the FUTURAL meta-search platform by adding at least ten (10) more SS co-created within rural communities across Europe.

## 2. Open Call for co-creating SS with rural communities

### 2.1 General Information

The FUTURAL Open Call for co-creating SS with rural communities aims to attract SMEs and other interested parties including start-ups, research organisations, rural communities (e.g., municipalities, regional authorities, development agencies, NGOs etc.) who can either develop and implement SS within the 5 domains or contribute to the expansion of the local ecosystem, capacity building of the community, and improvement of the livelihoods.

FUTURAL will accept applications from small consortia consisting of two (2) to four (4) parties, involving  $\geq 1$  (at least one) technical party (e.g., SMEs, startups, research organisations) and  $\geq 1$  (at least one) rural community (e.g., Municipalities, Regional authorities, Development agencies, NGOs etc) and proposed solutions must fall within one of the following domains:

- Circular bioeconomy, biodiversity and ecosystem management
- Resilience to shocks
- Citizen Engagement and Quality of Life
- Lifelong Education and Training
- Climate Adaptation and Mitigation

The FUTURAL Open Call will be launched on June 28, 2024. The proposal evaluation and sub-grant agreement preparation will take place between October 2024 and May 2025. Selected projects will be launched in June 2025 having an implementation timeframe of 12 months (until May 2026). The 12-month implementation period will be divided into 3 phases:

- Phase 1 – Design [Deliverable: Activity plan] (June 2025 – September 2025)
- Phase 2 - Development [Deliverable: Digital smart solution demonstration] (October 2025 – February 2026)
- Phase 3 - Validation [Deliverable: Report on market or community associated activities]. (March 2026 – May 2026)

The Open Call will result in at least 10 projects (max €120k euro per project – min €30,000 - max €60,000 per third party). In total, a €1.2m euro budget will be allocated to financial support to third parties.

*Table 1: FUTURAL Open Call – application and selection timeline*

	Activity	Date
<b>Application and selection</b>	Launch of the Open Call	June 28, 2024
	Deadline for submitting the proposals	September 30, 2024
	Eligibility check	October 2024
	Evaluation and selection	November 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024
	Evaluation results and contracting	January 1, 2025 – May 31, 2025

### 2.2 Topics

Open call applicants need to develop their own SS (different from the eight smart solutions developed by the FUTURAL partners), based on the five FUTURAL SS domains, to be applied

in other rural areas (in at least ten European rural areas other than the areas covered by the six MAP areas) to enable potential transferability and replicability of innovations to EU rural areas facing similar conditions. More details can be found in the FUTURAL Open Call Applicants' Guide.

It is important to note that the applicants are encouraged to submit proposals based on their own ideas related to the topic of FUTURAL Open Calls. To be eligible, proposals need to address challenges in rural areas.

### 2.3 Eligibility criteria

Eligible stakeholders to participate in the call for third party funding include SMEs, start-ups, research organisations, rural communities (e.g., Municipalities, Regional authorities, Development agencies, NGOs etc.).

Detailed eligibility criteria are described in the FUTURAL Open Call Applicants' Guide, Section 3.2 Eligibility criteria.

An automatic filtering to discard non-eligible proposals will be based on the following criteria:

- legal entity is established in an eligible for HE funding country.
- the consortium is allowed to submit only one proposal.
- a party can participate only in one consortium; If an applicant participates in more than one proposal, then all proposals will be considered as ineligible.
- Proposals are not pre-selected in the other projects' open calls' funded under the same topic (HORIZON-CL6-2022-COMMUNITIES-02-01-two-stage), i.e. RURACTIVE and SMART ERA
- Proposal includes at least one technical party SMEs, Start-ups, Research organisations) and at least one rural community (e.g. Municipalities, Regional authorities, Development agencies, NGOs etc);
- proposed solutions fall within one of the five domains proposals and address challenges in rural areas.
- Proposed solutions must be different from the eight (8) existing SS developed within the FUTURAL project as described in section 1 of the Applicants Guide.
- Proposed solutions must be applied in rural areas, different from those covered by the existing MAP areas as described in section 1 of the Applicants Guide

On top of that, the following will be considered:

- Existing consortium members of the FUTURAL project and their affiliated entities will not be eligible for the OC.
- The proposal must be delivered before the defined deadline (September 30th, 2024, at 17:00 CET), applying the requested submission procedure.
- Proposals shall only ask for funding for that part of the work that is not yet accomplished and will be carried out once having been selected for funding. Of course, this does not exclude the usage of e.g. results, IP, infrastructures or approaches already held by the applicants.
- All applicants must have a valid VAT number and must be active and operational. However, in case having VAT number is not mandatory according to the national legislation of the applicant's country, a registration number from the respective national authority (National business registry, Commercial court or similar) must be provided.

### 2.4 Submission procedure

FUTURAL's Open Call for proposals will be submitted digitally through the <https://opencallhub.eu/> portal. Interested Applicants should visit FUTURAL website (<https://futural-project.eu/futural-open-call/>) for any updates and the FAQ section available in the Open Call Hub - OCH).

Submissions received through any other channel will be automatically discarded.

Documents required in subsequent phases will be submitted via dedicated channels, which will be indicated by the FUTURAL consortium in the contracting phase.

In case multiple versions of the same application are submitted, only the last version will be evaluated. All the previous ones will be discarded.

## **2.5 Origin of funds**

The funds provided through the Open Call originate directly from the funds of the Horizon Europe Project FUTURAL, which is funded by the European Commission under Grant Agreement Number 101083958.

In order to receive funding, any selected proposal will sign a dedicated Sub-Grant Agreement with the FUTURAL consortium.

More details on obligations of beneficiaries can be found in Chapter 5 of the Open Call Applicants' Guide.

## **3. Points of contact**

For all the information related to FUTURAL Open Call please state your question on the FAQ section on the <https://opencallhub.eu/> or contact us at [futural@opencallhub.eu](mailto:futural@opencallhub.eu)