



FUTURAL

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

Frequently Asked Questions



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

1. Where can I find more details on the Open Call? Any Guide for Applicants?

FUTURAL Open Call Kit (with all relevant documents and instructions) can be found on the FUTURAL project website: <https://futural-project.eu/futural-open-call/>, under the Open Call tab.

2. Are single applicants eligible to apply? Or this call is for consortia only?

For the FUTURAL Open Call, only consortia of 2-4 partners can apply. Single applicants are not eligible. Consortia with more than 4 entities will be rejected during the eligibility criteria evaluation phase.

3. How many applications can one entity submit? And how many of them can be selected for funding?

Applicants can participate in only 1 consortium and participate in the call with only one proposal. If multiple versions of the same application are submitted, only the last version will be evaluated.

4. For how long will the platform accept proposals?

The platform will open for proposal submission on June 28th, 2024 and it will remain open until 17:00 CET (Brussels time) on September 30th, 2024.

5. Can entities from non-EU countries submit proposals to the FUTURAL Open Call?

Funding will be open to all legal entities eligible for Horizon Europe funding. Applicants from non-EU countries need to check with the Europe Regulation 2021/695 and the List of participating countries (HE): v2.9 – 21.03.2024) for their eligibility along with the specific eligibility criteria set for the FUTURAL Open Call, described in Paragraph 3.2.2 of the FUTURAL Open Call Applicants' Guide. For a proposal to be eligible, all partners of the competing consortium need to fulfil the eligibility criteria.

6. Can successful applicants receive payment in advance after contracting ?

No pre-financing can be anticipated. All payments will be related to the acceptance of certain deliverables. First payment will take place after the submission and evaluation of the first deliverable in M04.

7. Regarding investment in equipment: is it possible to finance the full cost with the project?

FUTURAL project follows the guidelines of the European Commission in terms of cost eligibility for financing within its open calls. Regarding equipment costs, as stated in the documents of the Open Call kit: Borrowing or loaning of the necessary equipment is not eligible, only depreciation costs for purchased equipment are eligible.

8. Regarding budget: the costs to be included in the template include VAT or not?

VAT is eligible where it is not recoverable under the applicable national VAT legislation AND is paid by a beneficiary other than a non-taxable person within the meaning of the first subparagraph of Article 13(1) of Directive 2006/11218 (see Article 186(4)(c) FR). VAT is considered 'not recoverable' within the meaning of Article 186(4) FR if it is not deductible or refundable under the applicable national VAT legislation.

9. Should the consortium be transnational, meaning that we include two countries, or national with a single country?

FUTURAL will accept applications from small consortia consisting of two (2) to four (4) parties, involving ≥ 1 (at least one) technical party (e.g., SMEs, startups, research organisations) and ≥ 1 (at least one) rural community (e.g., Municipalities, Regional authorities, Development agencies, NGOs etc.) and proposed solutions must fall within one of the 5 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

Selected consortia will receive funding for developing and applying their own original digital smart solution, i.e. different from the eight (8) Smart Solutions that will be developed by the FUTURAL partners, representing regions beyond the existing MAPs, within the five (5) domains as described above, including solution prototyping, testing, demonstrating and designing a sustainable business model.

There are no other restrictions on the consortium's composition. Partners may come from the same or different countries, making it either transnational or national.

10. How do you define a technical party beyond their legal form or size?

FUTURAL will accept applications from small consortia consisting of two (2) to four (4) parties, involving ≥ 1 (at least one) technical party (e.g., SMEs, startups, research organisations) and ≥ 1 (at least one) rural community (e.g., Municipalities, Regional authorities, Development agencies, NGOs etc.) and proposed solutions must fall within one of the 5 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.

A technical party must have the capability to **develop** technologies, tools, methodologies, and other relevant solutions that empower rural communities and address the project's objectives.

11. Is subcontracting allowed up to 25% of the total budget or of the related partner's budget (responsible for the subcontracting)?

Subcontracting can comprise up to 25% of the individual partner's budget and consequently, up to 25% of the total project budget. Selected Applicants should follow the standards for subcontracting set by the European Commission, ensuring best value for money and absence of conflict of interest, during the project implementation. Procurement should be done according to the national and European regulation that is applied to each applicant's institution. Selected Applicants are responsible for the proper implementation of the subcontracted action tasks by the subcontractors (proper quality, timely delivery, etc.).

12. Can i have a template of budget proposal?

The FUTURAL Open Call Budget Template, provided as an Excel document, is included in the FUTURAL Open Call Kit (can be found on the FUTURAL project website, under the Open Call tab: <https://futural-project.eu/futural-open-call/>). The budget must be filled in for each proposal using the templates available. Applicants will then save the template as pdf and upload it on the Open Call Hub platform.

Please note that an updated FUTURAL Open Call Budget Template is now available.

13. Can we submit a proposal in another rural area of a country that already has a MAP running?

FUTURAL will launch a single Open Call (OC) to fund at least ten (10) additional projects that will 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) and be available on the project's metasearch platform, providing Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) as a mechanism to increase the number of SS available to rural communities and accelerate network expansion.

The FUTURAL Open Call does not explicitly exclude entire countries from applying if they already have one of the six MAP areas, it only excludes the specific areas that already have a Multi-Actor Pilot (MAP) as described in section 1 of the Applicants Guide.

14. Is this call for EU only. OR Global call...

FUTURAL will launch a single Open Call (OC) to fund at least ten (10) additional projects that will 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) and be available on the project's metasearch platform, providing Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) as a mechanism to increase the number of SS available to rural communities and accelerate network expansion.

The FUTURAL Open Call does not explicitly exclude entire countries from applying if they already have one of the six MAP areas, it only excludes the specific areas that already have a Multi-Actor Pilot (MAP) as described in section 1 of the Applicants Guide.

15. If the total project budget cannot exceed 120,000€, and there are two partners involved, must each partner have exactly 60,000€ in their budget, or can the distribution be different, such as one partner having 80,000€ and the other 40,000€?

The total project budget must be between €60,000 and €120,000. The budget distribution between partners does not need to be equal, but it must respect the minimum and maximum limits per partner set in the Applicants Guide, i.e. each partner in the consortium can receive a minimum of €30,000 and a maximum of €60,000.

16. When developing a SS can we have one or more physical site in rural areas as testing sites? and therefore having funded the necessary equipments and accessories following the depreciation principle?

Yes, when developing a smart solution (SS), you can establish one or more physical sites in rural areas as testing sites. Funding for the necessary equipment and accessories at these sites is possible, provided that the costs are calculated according to the depreciation principle and comply with the guidelines on cost eligibility. Additionally, these costs must fall within budget limits as set in the Applicants' Guide and align with the objectives of the FUTURAL Open Call.

17. We are interested in submitting a proposal to Futural Open Call as a consortium of two entities and these two entities are related to each other. Can we participate?

Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a partner). Affiliated entities will get a part of the EU funding and must therefore comply with all the call conditions (just like partners). But affiliated entities do not sign the sub-grant agreement and do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition [≥ 1 (at least one) technical party and ≥ 1 (at least one) rural community].

Affiliated entities are considered as a single partner within the consortium. This means that the budget allocated to affiliated entities is cumulative and must not exceed the budgetary limits for one partner set in the Applicants Guide.

18. Do we need to provide the PIC number for every participating partner?

The requirement for a PIC number is typically specific to EU-funded projects where the EU's Funding & Tenders portal is used to manage applications and participant information. In the framework of FUTURAL Open Call, applications are being submitted through the Open Call Hub platform, so a PIC (Participant Identification Code) number is not required.

19. Apart from its legal status (e.g., SMEs, Start-ups, Research organisation), as defined in the application guidelines, we would like to know if specific NACE codes are requested or specific activities indicated in their Registration Document?

FUTURAL will accept applications from small consortia consisting of two (2) to four (4) parties, involving ≥ 1 (at least one) technical party (e.g., SMEs, startups, research organisations) and ≥ 1 (at least one) rural community (e.g., Municipalities, Regional authorities, Development agencies, NGOs etc.) and proposed solutions must fall within one of the 5 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.

A technical party must have the capability to **develop** technologies, tools, methodologies, and other relevant solutions that fall within one of the 5 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**, empower rural communities and address the project's objectives.

20. How can affiliated entities participate in the project?

Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a partner). Affiliated entities will get a part of the EU funding and must therefore comply with all the call conditions (just like partners). But affiliated entities do not sign the sub-grant agreement and do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition [≥ 1 (at least one) technical party and ≥ 1 (at least one) rural community].

Affiliated entities are considered as a single partner within the consortium. This means that the budget allocated to affiliated entities is cumulative and must not exceed the budgetary limits for one partner set in the Applicants Guide.

21. Can you please check the rules of 25% for Subcontracting and 7% for dissemination in the Proposal-Template_-Budget-Table in the relevant cells? It seems that the rules are not set properly.

Interested Applicants should visit FUTURAL website (<https://futural-project.eu/futural-open-call/>) for any updates.

Please note that an updated file has been uploaded on the FUTURAL website (<https://futural-project.eu/futural-open-call/>).

22. Are sole proprietorships also eligible as partner in the consortium? If so, do they need to fill in the Declaration of Conducting Business?

Applicants must develop 'a digital solution that can seamlessly be incorporated into FUTURAL and contribute to its growth and expansion'. What exactly is meant by this? The solution will be an independent operating tool or service I assume?

What is the EU-RIF event in 2027?

Sole proprietorships are eligible to participate as partners in a consortium, provided they are legally established and meet the general eligibility criteria outlined in the Open Call Applicants' Guide. Sole proprietorships need to fill in the Declaration of Conducting Business.

All SS derived from the OC will be accessible through the FUTURAL Metasearch Platform, which is a key outcome of FUTURAL serving as a 'one-stop-shop' that offers enhanced capabilities for searching and accessing digitised solutions and services for rural areas. The Metasearch platform will be built with the aim of integrating the SS to be developed by FUTURAL and the OC projects, as well as host the SS available by other EU-funded projects and initiatives.

The EU-wide Rural Innovation Forum (EU-RIF) is an annual two-day event to promote networking and synergies between key actors in the rural ecosystem (MAP participants, rural

innovation network representatives, policymakers and implementers, EU-funded R&D projects, organisations, and entrepreneurs) with the aim to set the groundwork for capacity building and expertise sharing (e.g. share lessons learned, organize workshops, showcase technologies). All OC SS will be showcased at the final EU-RIF event in M45 (February 2027) by the OC projects representatives.

23. Are there any specific sections of the proposal that are considered more important than others?

The proposal must not exceed the limit of 15 pages. All tables, figures, references, and any other element pertaining to the application must be included as an integral part of the application and are thus counted against this page limit. Excess pages will not be considered during the evaluation of the proposal. The cover page and the ToC are not included in the limit of the 15 pages. Removing explanatory text in the proposal template, located below the paragraph subtitles is allowed. Budget tables do not count against the page limit of 15 pages.

All sections are considered equally important and will be evaluated against the award criteria outlined in the Applicants' Guide.

24. Is Kenya eligible for this funding?

Based on the official document of the EU (EU Grants: List of participating countries (HE): V3.1 – 11.07.2024), Kenya is among the countries eligible for Horizon Europe funding: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon- Euratom_en.pdf

However, please keep in mind that the proposal will be evaluated on the basis of the added value/ benefits it can bring to European rural areas.

25. Does 'No pre-financing' mean that partners in the consortium will first have to use their funds and be reimbursed after submitting a particular deliverable?

According to the FUTURAL_Open_Call_Applicants_Guide and specifically chapter 4.1 "Implementation timeline and activities", 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) - Payment of 20% of the total fund

→ Phase 2 - Development [Deliverable: Digital smart solution demonstration] (October 2025 - February 2026) - Payment of 50% of the total fund

→ Phase 3 - Validation [Deliverable: Report on market or community associated activities] (March 2026 - May 2026) - Payment of the final 30% of the total fund

In all selected projects, payments are deliverable based, meaning that the sub-grantees have to deliver a specific report after the end of each phase in order to receive the payment (no prefinancing is foreseen).

"No prefinancing" means that the partners will be reimbursed only after they have completed a specific phase of the project and submitted the corresponding deliverable for review. Payment will be made based on the approval of these deliverables, meaning that the partners must first deliver the required outputs before receiving any payment.

26. Is it possible to gather formal endorsements (e.g. letters of support) from other entities that are not partners but support the project during the application phase?

According to the FUTURAL Open Call, there is no formal requirement for letters of support. However, you are welcome to mention their existence in your proposal.

27. Do we need to include costs for the final certificates on the financial statements (CFS)?

The CFS is mandatory only if the requested EU contribution to costs \geq EUR 430 000. In the FUTURAL Open Call, the budget per partner of the consortium is €30,000 – €60,000 and there is no need to include costs for the final certificates on the financial statements (CFS).

28. Can one of the three partners in the consortium be neither a rural community nor a technical partner?

The composition of your consortium needs to meet the eligibility criteria set by the FUTURAL Open Call. The Call requires at least one technical partner and at least one rural community. Having a technical partner, a rural community, and a partner that is neither a rural community nor a technical partner is acceptable as long as you meet the minimum requirement of having at least one technical partner and one rural community in the consortium and provided that the partners' role is clearly defined and aligned with the project objective.

29. Are there any formal structures or contracts in place when two entities work together as a consortium for Futural?

Please refer to the consortium declaration in the Open Call kit that you can download by following the [FUTURAL Open Call](#)

30. Can rural communities receive funding as members of the consortium or can only the technical party receive funding?

The total project budget must be between €60,000 and €120,000. The budget distribution between partners must respect the minimum and maximum limits per partner set in the Applicants Guide, i.e. each partner in the consortium can receive a minimum of €30,000 and a maximum of €60,000. Both technical parties and rural communities receive funding.

31. Can all consortium members be from the same country?

FUTURAL will accept applications from small consortia consisting of two (2) to four (4) parties, involving ≥ 1 (at least one) technical party (e.g., SMEs, startups, research organisations) and ≥ 1 (at least one) rural community (e.g., Municipalities, Regional authorities, Development agencies, NGOs etc.) and proposed solutions must fall within one of the 5 following domains:

- Circular bioeconomy, biodiversity and ecosystem management
- Resilience to shocks
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Selected consortia will receive funding for developing and applying their own original digital smart solution, i.e. different from the eight (8) Smart Solutions that will be developed by the FUTURAL partners, representing regions beyond the existing MAPs, within the five (5) domains as described above, including solution prototyping, testing, demonstrating and designing a sustainable business model.

There are no other restrictions on the consortium's composition. Partners may come from the same or different countries, making it either transnational or national.

Funding will be open to all legal entities eligible for Horizon Europe funding. Applicants from non-EU countries need to check with the Europe Regulation 2021/695 and the List of participating countries (HE) for their eligibility along with the specific eligibility criteria set for the FUTURAL Open Call, described in Paragraph 3.2.2 of the FUTURAL Open Call Applicants' Guide. For a proposal to be eligible, all partners of the competing consortium need to fulfil the eligibility criteria.

32. On page 17, in the section referring to the ineligibility criteria: - the first criterion refers to the fact that the leading organization of the proposal must have a legal registration that supports it only in the intervention area, right?

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Referring to the first criterion, all partners must be legal entities in eligible country (as defined in section 3.2.2);

The final determination of suitability of all consortium members will be made by the external evaluators during the evaluation process and proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the added value/ benefits they can bring to European rural areas.

33. Can this entire 7% be assigned to a single partner, or must it be distributed among all partners, with each of us allocating 7% of our individual budgets to dissemination activities? The budget Excel file flags in red when a partner has no budget assigned for dissemination.

Applicants should take into consideration that adequate budget must be allocated to dissemination activities, focusing on spreading concise messages addressing challenges of each region. A minimum 7% of the funding will be allocated to the deployment of dissemination activities such as organisation of info days, workshops and informal events to promote the FUTURAL results.

Dissemination activities should comprise a minimum of 7% of the individual partner's budget and consequently a minimum of 7% of the total project budget.

34. It appears that the dissemination budget is excluded from a partner's total budget in the file. If a partner manages the full dissemination budget, must they still meet the minimum €30K threshold aside from the dissemination budget?

The budget allocated to dissemination activities is part of the total budget. You should allocate a minimum 7% of the total budget to dissemination activities and this amount should be clearly justified. The total budget (including the 7% for dissemination activities) must respect the minimum and maximum limits per partner set in the Applicants Guide.

35. In case any partner must pay back the money for any reason, the own partner should do it and assume that responsibility? Or the management and responsibility for the recovery of the funds is on the coordinator?

Every partner is responsible for their own financial management, hence potential recovery orders will be made to the specific partners.

36. In the proposal template, it states in the instructions: "The total length of the entire proposal, including the tables on Costs justification and funding (paragraph 6), must not be more than 15 pages.", while on the Budget template, it says "Budget tables do not count against the page limit of 15 pages, but please try to keep it to 1 page per partner." So, we are confused whether budget tables at the end of the document must be taken within the 15 pages or not. On the other hand, does the 7% of the budget for dissemination also include the travel to showcase the project results at the final EU-RIF event in M45?

The budget tables do not count against the page limit of 15 pages. The updated proposal template is already replaced on the FUTURAL OC Kit for Applicants to use.

The 7% of the budget for dissemination should include any cost regarding the organisation of info days, workshops and informal events to promote the FUTURAL results.

Travelling to showcase the project results at the final EU-RIF event in M45 should be budgeted under travel costs.

37. For the Digital Smart Solution demonstration, where is this planned to take place? Would it be in the rural community where our project is based?

All SS built by the OC projects will be demonstrated at the final EU-wide Rural Innovation Forum (EU-RIF) event in M45.

38. For diffusion and wider testing of our 'sub-project,' I imagine it would be ideal to collaborate with the Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) or other FUTURAL partners. Should travel to these other sites be included in the budget?

Travel costs necessary for the execution of the sub-project (travel for meetings with FUTURAL consortium, connections associated with the project and event/conferences (demonstration of the SS built at Final EU-RIF) should be included in the budget.

39. The budget guidelines seem to prioritize funding for personnel costs, with hardware investment only covering depreciation. Is this interpretation correct?

Within FUTURAL Open Call, the budget categories are listed in section 3.3 of the Applicants' Guide. The budget must be filled in for each proposal using the excel templates available. Applicants should take into consideration that adequate budget must be allocated to dissemination activities, focusing on spreading concise messages addressing challenges of each region. A minimum 7% of the funding will be allocated to the deployment of dissemination activities such as organisation of info days, workshops and informal events to promote the FUTURAL results. Applicants should explain and justify the budget (for each budget category separately). Funding depreciation cost for equipment (according to the national regulations/rules for depreciation is a standard practice across all Horizon Europe projects.

40. Our consortium partners may hire individuals (on freelance contracts) to manage specific aspects of the project. Would these be considered subcontracting?

Hiring individuals on freelance contracts to manage specific aspects of the project would typically be considered personnel costs rather than subcontracting. Subcontracting usually refers to external services provided by organizations or companies that are not part of the consortium. However, you should ensure that these freelance contracts align with the eligibility criteria and are justified within the project scope.

41. Would the hire of materials and equipment be covered under indirect costs?

The hire of materials and equipment would not typically be covered under indirect costs. Instead, these should be listed under direct costs, provided they are essential for project implementation. Indirect costs usually cover general overheads, which are not directly tied to the project activities.

42. When we click on the link to activate our account on opencallhub.eu, we get an error message that this site cant's be reached, please advise.

Please try to register and activate the account using a different email address. If the issue persists, please let us know.

43. While trying to create an account on opencallhub.eu, it asks for a VAT number- is that for the business or for the individual applying?

The VAT number requested in the registration phase regards the individual.

44. We have already submitted our application last week, and in the meantime some documents (proposal template, budget template) have been updated. Does this mean we will need to re-submit our application?

We highly recommend downloading and using the latest versions to ensure your submission meets the updated requirements. Please note that, for security reasons, the Open Call Hub does not allow re-submitting the same application using the same email address. You may need to use a different email for resubmission.

You can access the updated documents [here](#).

Please note that:

- The updated Proposal Template addressed the inconsistencies regarding the total proposal length (The budget tables do not count against the page limit of 15 pages)
- The updated Budget Template addressed the bugs in the calculation of the 25% ceiling for indirect costs

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

45. Are there any public deliverables from the FUTURAL project that we can review to understand better the context of the project?

You may refer to the FUTURAL project website. Public deliverables will be uploaded there only after their acceptance by the European Commission.

46. Is there any criteria to choose a domain of interest? Our solution could fit in two of them

There are no strict criteria that limit you to choosing the domain of interest in the FUTURAL Open Call. As indicated in the FUTURAL Open Call Kt, for the purposes of the FUTURAL Open Call, each project must select ONLY one SS domain that best fits the proposed solution. In case your proposed solution may fall within more than one domain, please choose the most prominent one that best aligns with the core objectives and outcomes of your solution.

47. If we currently have a signed contract with a rural community, can this rural community be as well our partner in the project?

The rural community can still be considered as a partner for the FUTURAL Open Call, provided that the project activities proposed under the FUTURAL call are different from those already covered under the existing contract.

48. What is the funding rate of the eligible costs? Is it the same for all partners?

The funding rate of the eligible costs is 100% and applies to all consortium partners, as described in section 1 of the Applicants Guide.

49. In the budget template: Question number 1: Under 4. Other Direct costs: Equipment costs, are discs for the server and a laptop considered eligible costs? Question number 2: Under 5. Other Direct costs, are training venues, lunches and workshops considered eligible costs?

Laptops and disk servers are considered eligible costs under Equipment if they are directly related to the project's implementation and are necessary for achieving the project's objectives. Within FUTURAL this budget category covers the depreciation costs of equipment.

Under "Other Direct Costs," expenses such as training venues, lunches, and workshops are generally considered eligible costs if they are essential for delivering project activities.

50. What criteria define a 'rural area' for the Futural project? We have found different definitions from the EU Commission, which are related to population density and the percentage of people living outside urban centers.

A **rural area** is an area where more than 50 % of its population lives in rural grid cells, as used in the degree of urbanisation.

In general, a rural area is a geographic area that is located outside towns and cities. Typical rural areas have a low population density and small settlements. Agricultural areas and areas with forestry are typically described as rural, as well as other areas lacking substantial development.

51. For the required rural community partner a number of examples are given: Municipalities, Regional authorities, Development agencies, NGOs etc. Would a formal cooperation between farmers also be considered a rural community?

Rural communities are generally defined as organisations or entities that represent or serve the interests of rural populations, such as municipalities, regional authorities, development agencies, NGOs, etc. "Rural Community" partners are expected to be nonprofit entities that represent or directly engage with the local rural population or community in a broader, public / society - oriented sense.

A formal cooperation between farmers can indeed be eligible to participate as a Rural Community within a consortium, provided that it's active in a rural area, its activities and role align with the objectives of the project and the Call requirements are met.

However, please note that the final determination of suitability of all consortium members will be made by the external evaluators during the evaluation process and proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the added value/ benefits they can bring to European rural areas.

52. We would like to confirm that it is allowed for one consortium partner to participate without funding. For example, for partners that they are already paid with public money to perform the duties and tasks they would be doing in the project, their participation would be at no cost, to avoid double funding.

It is allowed for one consortium partner to participate without funding provided that:

1. The budget does not exceed the limits for the project and for the partners set in the Applicants Guide.
2. The composition of your consortium needs to meet the eligibility criteria set by the FUTURAL Open Call.

You may also allocate budget to these partners participating in the consortium including eligible costs from the other budget categories (e.g. other than Personnel costs costs) as listed in section 3.3 of the Applicants' Guide.

53. Who retains ownership of the solution and intellectual property developed during the project? Are there any restrictions on how the developed solution can be commercialized or used outside the scope of the project?

Applicants that generate results own the attached Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) generated during the development process and will own results that are not IPRs. Each contractor is responsible for the management and protection of its IPRs and bears the costs associated with this. Applicants funded within the FUTURAL project will be the unique owners of the technologies created within the framework of their projects. Parts of their works that cannot be considered as trade secrets may be requested to be public for FUTURAL dissemination purposes.

54. On which domain or server will the application be hosted if included in the project? Additionally, should the application be developed as a web/cloud-based or mobile solution?

All SS derived from the OC will be accessible through the FUTURAL Metasearch Platform, which is a key outcome of FUTURAL serving as a 'one-stop-shop' that offers enhanced capabilities for searching and accessing digitised solutions and services for rural areas. The FUTURAL Metasearch platform is designed to host SS projects as a technological solution that will integrate a total of >48 digital SS. Applications need to be -at minimum as web/ cloud based, however beneficiaries may choose to additionally develop mobile solutions.

The FUTURAL Metasearch Platform does not provide the domain nor the server for the smart solutions. Applicants are responsible for hosting and maintaining their solutions themselves. FUTURAL will provide financial support to develop the solutions, but applicants will need to manage the hosting, software, and database maintenance independently. Once developed, these solutions will be linked and made available through the FUTURAL Metasearch Platform.

Regarding costs, the hosting and maintenance of the Smart Solutions during the project's duration are considered eligible expenses, as they are integral to the solution itself. After the grant ends, applicants will continue to manage and maintain their smart solutions. The Smart Solutions will be accessible via the FUTURAL Metasearch Platform, allowing creators (service provider) to offer them as services, ensuring long-term sustainability and potential revenue.

55. Is the software company allowed to generate revenue through its application while participating in the FUTURAL platform? We understand that the smart solution will be free for citizen users.

What applies is that the project's activities comply with the HE Open Access policy. i.e., online access to project outputs provided free of charge to the end-user.

Also note that according to **EU Grants: AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement (22.3.4 Final payment — Final grant amount — Revenues and Profit — Recover)**: if the no-profit rule is provided, the grant must not produce a profit (i.e. surplus of maximum grant amount plus the action's revenues, over the eligible costs and contributions approved by the granting authority). Revenue' is all income generated by the action, during its duration for beneficiaries that are profit legal entities (— with the exception of income generated by the exploitation of results, which are not considered as revenues). If there is a profit, it will be deducted in proportion to the final rate of reimbursement of the eligible costs approved by the granting authority.

Within FUTURAL, the no-profit rule is applied and Exception for revenues apply (to income generated by the exploitation of results, which are not considered as revenues).

The grant period allows for the development and deployment of the Smart Solution, but revenue generation from service providers is expected to start after the solution is fully functional and integrated into the market and any commercial activity should happen after the end of the project.

Regarding financial projections, as mentioned in subsection 3.1 of the Proposal Template you are required to provide projections for the next three years, i.e., a clear plan for the financial sustainability of the solution beyond the project's end in May 2026.

56. Are there any market exclusivity clauses or restrictions that would limit future business engagements with competitors after the project?

There are typically no market exclusivity clauses that would restrict future business engagements with competitors.

57. Could you inform me on the latest hourly rates that the EU holds as criteria? In case of our lead partner we work with freelancers and we won't have monthly salaries but calculate by the hour.

As stated in Section 3.3 (Eligible costs) of the Applicant's Guide, applicants must calculate personnel costs according to the rules and regulations of their country and real labour market data regarding the relevant positions.

58. Is it compulsory to include indirect costs in the budget?

In the context of the FUTURAL Open Call, it is not compulsory to include indirect costs in the budget, but it is common and recommended to do so to cover general overheads which are not directly tied to the project activities.

59. In the call text it appears that the partners must ask for between 30.000€ and 60.000€. Is it mandatory to ask for a minimum of 30,000 euros?

The total project budget must be between €60,000 and €120,000. The budget distribution between partners does not need to be equal, but it must respect the minimum and maximum limits per partner set in the Applicants Guide, i.e. each partner in the consortium can receive a minimum of €30,000 and a maximum of €60,000.

60. Can we put the CVs of our partners who are not permanent staff but who are involved in the proposal and if our proposal wins they will be involved as staff?

There is no requirement to include CVs at the submission stage. According to Section 3.3 of the Applicants' Guide, personnel costs should reflect the actual work being done and the deliverables produced during each of the three project phases. Applicants must calculate these costs according to their country's rules and labour market data for the relevant positions.

For the proposal, Applicants should demonstrate their organisational capacity and sufficiency in the team's background and provide the total amount allocated to personnel costs, along with the number of person-months required and the connection between personnel effort and the project's tasks and goals.

Therefore, while you do not need to submit CVs, it's important to include accurate estimates of the required person-months for all involved personnel, including those who will be brought on as staff if the proposal is successful and include details pertaining to the experience of your team members in the body of the proposal.

61. Can we remove from the template the explanations under each section, which take up a lot of space?

Removing explanatory text in the proposal template, located below the paragraph sub-titles is allowed

62. Regarding the letters of support, can we put their content or just refer to them and their general context and who we have received them from?

According to the FUTURAL Open Call, there is no formal requirement for letters of support. However, you are welcome to mention their existence in your proposal by referring to their general context and who you have received them from.

63. Can we in Morocco participate by submitting a proposal?

Based on the official document of the EU ([EU Grants: List of participating countries \(HE\): V3.1 – 11.07.2024](#)), Morocco is among the countries eligible for Horizon Europe funding: However, please keep in mind that the proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the added value/ benefits it can bring to European rural areas.

64. Could we delete the table with the five domains in section 2.1 of the proposal template? (we are not sure if it is a part of the template, and it takes up a lot of space)?

Yes, you may select the domain that best fits your proposed solution and delete the remaining rows of the table.

However, we recommend this only if you have exhausted every other option for saving space.

65. About the template, can we remove the cover? and the index and the copyright?

Please note that the cover page and the Table of Contents are not included in the limit of the 15 pages. Removing explanatory text in the proposal template, located below the paragraph sub-titles is allowed.

66. In order to make the budget, where is the EU-RIF? We need to know to include the trip in the budget.

According to the initial project's planning, the EU-RIF will take place in Pongau, Austria.

67. The term third-party refers to a partner of the subproject, is this correct?

Within FUTURAL Open Call, the term "third-party" refers to "partner of the consortium submitting a proposal", i.e. partner in the subproject.

68. Payments are deliverable based. I see that *"All payments to the SS consortiums will be related to the acceptance of certain deliverables spread over the three phases, which will be evaluated by the Advisory Board."* Does this mean that if a deliverable is not sufficiently justified the funding could be less than the one specified in the budget?

According to the FUTURAL_Open_Call_Applicants_Guide and specifically chapter 4.1 "Implementation timeline and activities", 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) - Payment of 20% of the total fund

→ Phase 2 - Development [Deliverable: Digital smart solution demonstration] (October 2025 - February 2026) - Payment of 50% of the total fund

→ Phase 3 - Validation [Deliverable: Report on market or community associated activities] (March 2026 - May 2026) - Payment of the final 30% of the total fund

In all selected projects, payments are deliverable based, meaning that partners will be reimbursed only after they have completed a specific phase of the project and submitted the corresponding deliverable for review. Payment will be made based on the approval of these deliverables, meaning that the partners must first deliver the required outputs before receiving any payment.

69. The DoH, section 4, it says: I certify that the business entity that I represent:
● is committed to participating in the FUTURAL Open Call sub-project, should my application get selected for funding;

● has stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain its activity throughout its participation in the FUTURAL Open Call sub-project and to provide any counterpart funding necessary; What is this part referring to? Is this expenditure not allocated in the proposal budget?

This part refers to the applicant's financial stability and ability to sustain operations during the project. It indicates that the entity must be able to support its participation, including covering any additional costs that may arise, beyond what is provided in the proposal budget.

● has or will have the necessary resources as and when needed to carry out its

involvement in the FUTURAL Open Call sub-project. >>> I guess this refers to e premises?

This part refers to the availability of operational resources, such as premises, equipment, personnel, or any other necessary infrastructure, ensuring that the entity can meet the demands of the project.

70. I understand the 15 page limite does not include cover page, ToC and budget tables. Can you please confirm that the budget tables are ALL the tables in section 6 i.e. we have 15 pages for sections 1 to 5?

According to the Applicants' Guide (pg 14, Section 2.5), "...the structure of the provided proposal template must be followed when preparing the proposal and should not exceed the limit of 15 pages. All tables, figures, references, and any other element pertaining to the application must be included as an integral part of the application and are thus counted against this page limit. Excess pages will not be considered during the evaluation of the proposal".

In addition, in Section 3.3 (pg 21) of the Applicants' Guide, it states that: "...the budget must be filled in for each proposal using the excel templates available. Applicants will then save the excel sheet as pdf and upload it on the Open Call Hub platform...." while on the Budget template, it says "Budget tables do not count against the page limit of 15 pages, but please try to keep it to 1 page per partner"

So, the Budget tables of the Budget Template do not count against the page limit of 15 pages.

71. In the Proposal Template of the FUTURAL Open Call for co-creating SS with rural communities, at the table at 8. Costs justification and funding, 8.1 Deliverables List, the template lists the three deliverables (1. Activity plan, 2. Digital smart solution demonstration, 3. Report on market or community associated activities).

Is it expected from the applicants to ONLY add the budget (in euros) in the relevant empty cells for the 3 predefined deliverables or can applicants add additional rows/deliverables on the table?

Regarding table 6.1 Deliverables List, in Section 6. Costs justification and funding of the Proposal Template, please note that no additional rows are needed in the table, applicants are expected to break down their requested budget among the three implementation phases (that are linked to the submission of the 3 deliverables).

72. The conducting business document has to be fulfilled and signed for every partner? It is difficult to understand how it has to be done by a municipality.

According to the Applicants' Guide (Section 3, pg 15):

The Declaration of Conducting Business is submitted only by SMEs and declares that the Applicants are SMEs according to EC standards. The document must be filled in appropriately, signed by SMEs legal representative and stamped (with the SMEs stamp). SMEs' scanned documents are then merged and uploaded as one pdf file.

In the case of Research Institutes (RI), confirmation from a responsible authority/registry (e.g., Commercial court or similar) must be submitted (any official document from the respective registration authority is acceptable).

Public organisations do not need to submit the Declaration of Conducting Business.

For private entities (NGOs, etc.), any official document from the respective registration authority or any official document as proof of their legal existence at the moment of application is acceptable.

73. Will there be an additional extension regarding the deadline of September 30, 2024?

There is no extension planned for the deadline of the FUTURAL Open Call. The submission deadline remains set for September 30, 2024 at 17:00 CET.

74. We are not sure about the number of Consortium declaration(s) (number of copies) needed to be submitted - it is not completely clear in the Applicants' Guide:

Must each partner fill in and sign their own Consortium declaration (with the same data in the tables for all), or only 1 joint Consortium declaration is to be signed by all the partners?

From the text in the Guide it seems they all need their separate ones with the same signatures on each declaration, but usually this type of declarations are signed jointly and submitted in 1 copy (1 joint document).

According to Applicants' Guide (3. Proposal Submission and Selection, pg 15), the Consortium Declaration is submitted by all OC consortium partners. The document must be filled in appropriately, signed by each partner's legal representative and stamped (with the institution's stamp), scanned, merged and uploaded as one pdf file.

Only 1 joint Consortium declaration is required to be signed by all the partners. Please note that each partner can sign in a separate page and then scan, merge and upload as one pdf file.

75. We want to request a minimum amount of €60,000 for the grant in our project. In order for the grant to be used more efficiently for rural benefits, regarding personnel expenses; we want to assign two part-time personnel as co-financing partners in the project, a coordinator (from lead partner) and an assistant (from consortium or lead partner). Can there be any problems in terms of eligible costs?

In terms of financing, each project may ask for a total budget between €60,000 and €120,000, and each partner can receive a minimum of €30,000 and a maximum of €60,000. Both technical parties and rural communities receive funding. The funding rate of the eligible costs is 100% and applies to all consortium partners. FUTURAL project follows the guidelines of the European Commission in terms of cost eligibility for financing within its open call.

Each selected consortium will receive the funding on a lump sum basis, in compliance with [EC's Guidelines about lump sum grants in Horizon Europe](#).

A payment calendar tied to milestones, such as reports and corresponding deliverables, will be set in advance according to the phases described in the Applicants' Guide. No financial contribution will be required from the selected consortia.

76. Regarding compulsory documents, I see that the University must provide :

1- DoH

2- Consortium declaration signed

3- The Declaration of Conducting Business is not necessary for the University since, as stated in the Applicant's guide: Public organisations do not need to submit the Declaration of Conducting Business.

Am I right?

According to the Applicants' Guide (Section 3, pg 15):

The Consortium Declaration is submitted by all OC consortium partners. The document must be filled in appropriately, signed by each partner's legal representative and stamped (with the institution's stamp), scanned, merged and uploaded as one pdf file.

The Declaration of Honour is submitted by all OC consortium partners. The document must be filled in appropriately, signed by each partner's legal representative and stamped (with the institution's stamp). Partners' scanned documents are then merged and uploaded as one pdf file.

The Declaration of Conducting Business is submitted only by SMEs and declares that the Applicants are SMEs according to EC standards. The document must be filled in appropriately,

signed by SMEs legal representative and stamped (with the SMEs stamp). SMEs' scanned documents are then merged and uploaded as one pdf file.

In the case of Research Institutes (RI), confirmation from a responsible authority/registry (e.g., Commercial court or similar) must be submitted (any official document from the respective registration authority is acceptable).

Public organisations do not need to submit the Declaration of Conducting Business.

For private entities (NGOs, etc.), any official document from the respective registration authority or any official document as proof of their legal existence at the moment of application is acceptable.

However, we can not be more specific as differences may apply between countries as well as with regards to the legal type of the applicant.

77. Does a non-profit organization have to fill out the declaration of conducting business? Is a certified copy of the stamped statutes sufficient? Even if the document is in French?

The Declaration of Conducting Business is submitted only by SMEs and declares that the Applicants are SMEs according to EC standards. The document must be filled in appropriately, signed by SMEs legal representative and stamped (with the SMEs stamp). SMEs' scanned documents are then merged and uploaded as one pdf file.

In the case of Research Institutes (RI), confirmation from a responsible authority/registry (e.g., Commercial court or similar) must be submitted (any official document from the respective registration authority is acceptable).

Public organisations do not need to submit the Declaration of Conducting Business. For private entities (NGOs, etc.), any official document from the respective registration authority or any official document as proof of their legal existence at the moment of application is acceptable

For private entities (NGOs, etc.), any official document from the respective registration authority or any official document as proof of their legal existence at the moment of application is acceptable.

According to the Applicants' Guide (Section 2.4, pg 14): English is the official language for the FUTURAL Open Call. Applications submitted in any other language will not be evaluated. English is also the only official language throughout the whole execution of the FUTURAL project. This means all requested contributions (documents of the OC kit) must be submitted in English to be eligible. In the case of official documents as a proof of the legal existence of the applicant, they can be submitted in original language, however if it is deemed essential to facilitate the eligibility check, Applicants may be requested to provide additional documentation (i.e., translation of an official document into English) in a timely manner.

78. Who should be present at the EU-RIF final event in M45 (February 2027)? All members mandatory or project coordinators are enough?

All OC Smart Solutions will be showcased at the final EU-RIF event in M45 (February 2027) by representatives of the OC projects. This could be the Consortium Leader, another partner, or all members of the consortium. It is up to the partners to decide which option fits best, depending on the available budget.

79. Is the participation in the EU-RIF final event in M45 (February 2027) a disqualification from the application? given the carbon impact of such a trip (Australia)?

Please note that according to the initial project's planning, the EU-RIF will take place in Pongau, Austria (not Australia).

The EU-wide Rural Innovation Forum (EU-RIF) is an annual two-day event to promote networking and synergies between key actors in the rural ecosystem (MAP participants, rural

innovation network representatives, policymakers and implementers, EU-funded R&D projects, organisations, and entrepreneurs) with the aim to set the groundwork for capacity building and expertise sharing (e.g. share lessons learned, organize workshops, showcase technologies). All OC SS will be showcased at the final EU-RIF event in M45 (February 2027) by the OC projects representatives.

Participation in the event is **not a disqualification** from the application process due to concerns about carbon impact. The final event is an opportunity to showcase your Smart Solution (SS), and it's up to each project to decide which representatives attend, taking into account the available budget and environmental considerations.

80. The applicant's guide refers to smart digital solutions but provide no definition of "smartness". Should we take some specific definition into account and is there a criterion on the "smartness" of our proposed digital solution?

The Applicants' Guide does not offer a specific definition but provides clear guidance on the expectations for Smart Digital Solutions. These solutions are required to demonstrate a high level of innovation, scientific, and technological excellence, starting at **Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 4** and advancing to **TRL 7** by the end of the project.

In this context and according to Applicants' Guide (1.4 Purpose and Objectives, pg. 9, 1.5 Call Expected Outcome, pg. 10, 3.5 Evaluation process pg. 23) and the explanatory text in the proposal template, "smartness" should be understood as the solution's ability to:

1. employ technologies that enhance their functionality, adaptability, and user interaction tailoring its services to the needs of the community improving their experience.
2. connect with other systems or platforms, ensuring smooth collaboration and integration within the FUTURAL Metasearch platform.
3. provide practical and transferable innovative solutions to challenges faced by rural communities in a variety of fields and should offer scalable features that solve current problems and have the potential to enable the transferability and accelerate the uptake and upscale to different contexts.
4. contribute to the local ecosystem, strengthening the capacities of the community and improving livelihoods.
5. make the most of data from various sources, ensuring that users themselves become part of the solution.

81. On page 3 of FUTURAL-Open-Call-Declaration-of-Conducting-Business document, does the ()EUR 1,000 indicate that the amounts should be expressed in thousands or that the format of the number should be like this, meaning the thousands should be separated by (,) comma?**

The (**)EUR 1,000 indicates that the format of the number should be like this, meaning the thousands should be separated by (,) comma (i.e., Annual turnover EUR1,000,000)

82. Is there an option in the Open Call Hub to temporarily save the proposal and its annexes, or is there only the option for final submission?

There is no possibility of temporarily saving the draft proposal and its annexes.

83. If one partner stamped the Declaration of Consortium and then signed it with a digital signature, how can the second partner stamp and sign the Declaration either digitally or physically and maintain the information from the initial digital signature?

According to Applicants' Guide (3. Proposal Submission and Selection, pg 15), the Consortium Declaration is submitted by all OC consortium partners. The document must be filled in appropriately, signed by each partner's legal representative and stamped (with the institution's stamp), scanned, merged and uploaded as one pdf file.

Only 1 joint Consortium declaration is required to be signed by all the partners. Please note that each partner can sign in a separate page and then scan, merge and upload as one pdf file.

84. Regarding the project's output data accesibility, we would like to have confirmation if it is possible to make the access to the Restful APIs restricted on paywall basis.

As outlined in Annex A, it is important to ensure that the dataset or the real-time data generator follows the FAIR principles, meaning that it is findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable, so that it can be used for other applications as well. The FUTURAL Open Call strongly encourages open access to project output data. An open-source API is expected to be available for accessing these services, ensuring that the data can be freely and widely used. Implementing a paywall to restrict access to the RESTful APIs imposes limitations on accessibility and reduces the potential impact of the project's outputs. The project's principles of openness and transparency are best served by ensuring unrestricted access to the generated data and services.

85. Did I understand well that the proposal should do both: develop a technical solution with TRL7 and a business model to go with it?

Yes, your understanding is correct. The proposal should aim to both develop a technical solution at Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 7 and also outline a viable business model to support the deployment and scaling of this solution, meeting the specific requirements of the project as stated in section 2.2 of the Applicants' Guide.

86. Can the consortium be composed only of Italian partners, or must it consist of a European partnership?

Selected consortia will receive funding for developing and applying their own original digital smart solution, i.e. different from the eight (8) Smart Solutions that will be developed by the FUTURAL partners, representing regions beyond the existing MAPs, within the five (5) domains as described above, including solution prototyping, testing, demonstrating and designing a sustainable business model.

There are no other restrictions on the consortium's composition. Partners may come from the same or different countries, making it either transnational or national.

87. Can I make my proposal with a locality of my choice? Or do I have to make a proposal together with one of the localities chosen by you for futural?

The Open Call (OC) will fund at least ten (10) additional projects that will 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 different from those covered by the six MAP areas).

You can choose the locality for your proposal, provided that it meets the criteria outlined in the FUTURAL Open Call.

88. We've read all the documents, but we can't find a definition of "technical partner". Apart from its legal status (e.g., SMEs, Start-ups, Research organisation), as defined in the application guidelines, we would like to know if specific NACE codes are requested or specific activities indicated in their Registration Document?

FUTURAL will accept applications from small consortia consisting of two (2) to four (4) parties, involving ≥ 1 (at least one) technical party (e.g., SMEs, startups, research organisations) and ≥ 1 (at least one) rural community (e.g., Municipalities, Regional authorities, Development agencies, NGOs etc) and proposed solutions must fall within one of the 5 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.

A technical party must have the capability to **develop** technologies, tools, methodologies, and other relevant solutions that fall within one of the 5 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**, empower rural communities and address the project's objectives.

89. If the rural community where the project will be developed is in country A, can the technical party have its registered office/ headquarters in another EU country?

Yes, if the rural community where the project will be developed is in in country A, the technical party can have its registered office/ headquarters in another EU country.

90. The Declaration of Honor, as mentioned, must be signed by all partners of the consortium. We are wondering if each partner should sign their own declaration of honor or if all partners should sign the same document.

According to the Applicants' Guide (3. Proposal Submission and Selection, pg 15), the Declaration of Honour is submitted by all OC consortium partners. The document must be filled in appropriately, signed by each partner's legal representative and stamped (with the institution's stamp). Partners' scanned documents are then merged and uploaded as one pdf file.

All questions concerning the Call must be in writing and be stated on the FAQ section on the <https://opencallhub.eu/> or sent by e-mail to futural@opencallhub.eu. The deadline for asking clarification questions or requesting additional information is 48 hours before the deadline of the present Call. The answers shall be given no later than 24 hours before the deadline of the present Call. We strongly recommend Applicants to regularly visit the FAQ section to get valuable feedback for the preparation of their proposal.

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