



GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

CALL FOR PROPOSALS (CFP) FOR OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE PILOT LINE (DIGITAL EUROPE PROGRAMME)

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1. CONTEXT

The Chips JU Work Programme describes in its Appendix 4, related to the initiative part of the JU's activities for 2024, the launch of the Calls for Pilot Lines.

Each Call for Pilot Line includes three interrelated calls:

- Call for Expression of Interest for the selection of a Hosting Consortium
- Call for proposals for Set-up, integration and process development, funded under the Horizon Europe Programme
- Call for proposals for the operational activities of the pilot line, funded under the Digital Europe Programme

For each pilot line, three actions resulting in three contracts will be consequently implemented: Joint Procurement Agreement supporting the procurement of equipment under Digital Europe Programme; Horizon Europe grant supporting the building of the pilot line and the development of the technology, processes, methods and tools; and Digital Europe grant supporting the operation of and access to the pilot line.

From an implementation point of view, the pilot line proposal will need to be submitted in three calls under the respective programmes.

For each Call for Pilot Line, a **single complete proposal** will be built by the applicants. This proposal will follow the template:

Appendix2&4_Annex1_Template_ApplicationForm_v2.docx.

This single complete proposal will be submitted to the three interrelated calls per Pilot Line considering any necessary adjustments related to the different submission platforms and programme specific proposal templates of each of the interrelated calls.

To correctly submit a proposal in each of the three interrelated calls, please closely follow the corresponding guide for applicants and fill in correctly the respective programme specific templates.

The three submitted proposals will be evaluated by one pool of experts.

Only proposals successful in all three interrelated calls will be considered for funding.

This document aims to serve as guideline for the submission of proposals to the call for proposals for the operational activities of the pilot lines, funded under the Digital Europe Programme.



2. INTRODUCTION

The call for proposals for the operational activities of the pilot line is a call for proposals for EU action grants in the field of Semiconductors under the Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL).

We invite you to read this **guide for applicants**, the Model Grant Agreement, the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual](#) and the [EU Grants AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

The guide for applicants outlines the:

- background, objectives, scope and activities that can be funded as well as the expected results (sections 3)
- timetable and available budget (sections 4 and 5)
- admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 6 and 7)
- criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 8)
- evaluation and award procedure (section 9)
- award criteria (section 10)
- legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 11)
- how to submit an application (section 12)

The Online Manual outlines the:

- procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal (‘Portal’)
- recommendations for the preparation of the application

The AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement contains:

- detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc).

3. CONTEXT, EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND SCOPE

The context, expected outcomes, and scope for each of the Call for Pilot Line on Advanced Photonic Integrated Circuits (Chips-CPL-5) are described in Appendix 4 of the Chips JU Work Programme in section “2.3. Chips-2024-CPL-5: Pilot Line on Advanced Photonic Integrated Circuits”.



4. AVAILABLE BUDGET

The available budget is described in the Appendix 4 of the Chips JU Work Programme in section “3.2.2. Budget available”.

5. TIMETABLE AND DEADLINES

Proposals must be submitted before the call **deadline 17 September 2024 at 17:00:00 Brussels time.**

6. ADMISSIBILITY AND DOCUMENTS

Proposals must be submitted before the call deadline (see section 5).

Proposals must be submitted electronically via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible in the Search Funding & Tenders section). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Proposals (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided inside the Submission System.

Proposals must be complete and contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents. All below mentioned parts are mandatory. Applicants must pay special attention to upload all the annexes in the portal as they are mandatory. Please be aware that the system does not check that all annexes have been uploaded and allows the proposal to be submitted without having all the annexes uploaded in the portal.— Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (to be filled in directly online).

– Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project to be performed under Digital Europe programme (template to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded).

– List of previous projects (mandatory annex) — contains the single complete proposal as submitted in the Call for Expression of Interest for the selection of a Hosting Consortium.

– Ownership control declaration (mandatory annex) — contains the declaration of ownership control for each of the members of the Consortium. The template can be downloaded by the proposal coordinator from the submission tool after the draft proposal has been created in the portal.



– Other annexes (mandatory annex) — contains information on the national budgets. The Excel template for the National Budgets Table can be downloaded from the list of call documents at the Funding and Tenders portal.

7. ELIGIBILITY

The eligibility for the Calls for Proposals for Operational activities of the pilot lines is described in Appendix 4 of the Chips JU Work Programme in section “3. Call for Pilot Lines (CPL)”, sub-section “3.5.3. Eligibility criteria for the Call for Proposals for Operational activities of the pilot line”.

8. FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL CAPACITY AND EXCLUSION

The financial and operational capacity and exclusion for the Calls for Proposals for Operational activities of the pilot lines are described in Appendix 4 of the Chips JU Work Programme in section “3. Call for Pilot Lines (CPL)”, sub-section section “3.6.3. Selection and exclusion criteria for the Call for Proposals for Operational activities of the pilot line”.

9. EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURE

The evaluation and selection procedure for the Calls for Proposals for Operational activities of the pilot lines is described in Appendix 4 of the Chips JU Work Programme in section “3. Call for Pilot Lines (CPL)”, sub-section “3.8. Overview of the evaluation and selection procedure”.

10. AWARD CRITERIA

The award criteria for the Calls for Proposals for Operational activities of the pilot lines is described in Appendix 4 of the Chips JU Work Programme in section “3. Call for Pilot Lines (CPL)”, sub-section “3.7.3. Evaluation criteria for the Call for Proposals for Operational activities of the pilot line”.

11. LEGAL AND FINANCIAL SET-UP OF THE GRANT AGREEMENTS

If your proposal passes the evaluation, your project will be invited for grant preparation, where you will be asked to prepare the Grant Agreement together with the Chips JU Project Officer.

This Grant Agreement will set the framework for your grant and its terms and conditions, in particular concerning deliverables, reporting and payments.



The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on [Portal Reference Documents](#).

National Grant Agreements (National Contracts). Because of the Chips JU tripartite funding, the participants in Chips JU projects are in general requested to conclude also Grants/Contracts with the funding authorities in their respective countries in order to receive the National/Regional funding. The procedures for these grants/contracts are specific for each country and in the case of countries with various funding sources, there may be differences depending on these sources (for example for a country where both National and regional Funding are available, the funds may be managed by different organizations). Because the National/Regional Grants (Contracts) are handled exclusively by the National Funding Authorities in the respective countries, the applicants are advised to contact them directly. This should be done as soon as they receive the invitation for the Grant Agreement Preparation from Chips JU in order to have both processes (at EU level and at the national level) run in parallel in order to align/synchronize the requirements at both levels. In some countries, the National Funding may depend on the amount of EU Funding received and changes of one imply adjustments of the other. The Chips JU office and the National Funding Authorities work together to align and synchronize the procedures, but this is only possible with the full cooperation of the applicants. Applicants must also be aware of the specific conditions at their national level: for example, in case the costs are only eligible from the date the National Grant/Contract is signed even if the project starts at an earlier date.

12. HOW TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION

All proposals must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System. Paper applications are NOT accepted.

Submission is a **2-step process**:

a) create a user account and register your organisation

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to [create an EU Login user account](#).

Once you have an EU Login account, you can [register your organisation](#) in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

**b) submit the proposal**

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section (or, for calls sent by invitation to submit a proposal, through the link provided in the invitation letter).

Submit your proposal in 4 parts, as follows:

- **Part A** includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online.

The budget to be introduced should correspond to the operational activities of the pilot line to be carried out under the Digital Europe programme. Further information on costs can be found in the

Appendix2&4_Annex1_Template_ApplicationForm_v2.docx

- **Part B** (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal to be performed under Digital Europe programme. Download the mandatory Word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file. Applicants should strive to complete the Digital Europe template as precise and complete as possible following the different headers, instructions and tables included in the programme related template downloaded from the portal.

- **List of previous projects (mandatory annex)** — should be the single complete proposal as submitted in the Call for Expression of Interest for the selection of a Hosting Consortium (template: Appendix2&4_Annex1_Template_ApplicationForm_v2.docx). The document should be uploaded as PDF file in the portal. This document is requested for completeness, but it will not be part of the Digital Europe evaluation that will be performed on the basis of Part A and Part B above described.

- **Ownership control declaration (mandatory annex)** — should contain the declaration of ownership control for each of the members of the Consortium. Download the mandatory Word template “Ownership-control-declaration_DEP” from the system. This template should be filled in by each of the members of the Consortium. All the declarations of ownership control from all consortium members should be merged into a single PDF file and uploaded in the portal.

- **Other annexes (mandatory annex)** — contains information on the national budgets. The Excel template for the National Budgets Table can be downloaded from the list of call documents at the Funding and Tenders portal. It must be filled in and then uploaded as a PDF file in the portal.

**Part B and Annexes**

In this section you may upload the technical annex of the proposal (in PDF format only) and any other requested attachments.

Part B *	<input type="text"/>		<input type="button" value="Upload"/>
List of previous projects	<input type="text"/>		<input type="button" value="Upload"/>
Ownership control declaration	<input type="text"/>		<input type="button" value="Upload"/>
Other annexes	<input type="text"/>		<input type="button" value="Upload"/>

Documents must be uploaded to the **right category** in the Submission System otherwise the proposal might be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The proposal must be submitted **before the call deadline** (see section 5). After this deadline, the system is closed and proposals can no longer be submitted.

Once the proposal is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation e-mail** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your proposal has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the [IT Helpdesk webform](#), explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the [Online Manual](#). The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

13. HELP

As far as possible, **please try to find the answers you need yourself**, in this and the other documentation (we have limited resources for handling direct enquiries):

- [Online Manual](#)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions).



Please also consult the call page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates.

Contact

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the [IT Helpdesk](#).

Non-IT related questions contact: please write us to Calls@chips-ju.europa.eu

Please indicate clearly the reference of the call to which your question relates (see cover page).

14. IMPORTANT

- **Don't wait until the end** — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc*) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- **Consult** the Portal Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System** — By submitting the application, all participants **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).
- **Registration** — Before submitting the application, all beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners must be registered in the [Participant Register](#). The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **Consortium roles** — When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.
The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). **Subcontracting** should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.
- **Coordinator** — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions



and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any).

- **Associated partners** — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.
- **Consortium agreement** — For practical and legal reasons, it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium and can also help to protect you in case of disputes.
- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget (except under EU Synergies actions). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances declared to two different EU actions.
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (*see AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E*).
- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this guide for applicants (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.



- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, *see section 12*).

- **Transparency** — In accordance with Article 38 of the [EU Financial Regulation](#), information about EU grants awarded is published each year on the [Europa website](#). This includes:

- o beneficiary names
- o beneficiary addresses
- o the purpose for which the grant was awarded
- o the maximum amount awarded.

The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise your rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

- **Data protection** — The submission of a proposal under this call involves the collection, use and processing of personal data. This data will be processed in accordance with the applicable legal framework. It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your proposal, subsequent management of your grant and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation and communication. Details are explained in the [Funding & Tenders Portal Privacy Statement](#).

15. ANNEX 1: DIGITAL EUROPE SIMPLE GRANTS TYPE OF ACTION

Simple Grants

Description: Simple Grants (SIMPLE) are a flexible type of action used by a large variety of topics and can cover most activities. The consortium will mostly use personnel costs to implement action tasks, activities with third parties (subcontracting, financial support, purchase) are possible but should be limited.

Funding rate: 50%

Payment model: Prefinancing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment