



Horizon Europe

Guide for applicants

Chips JU Call for Proposals (HORIZON-JU-Chips-2025-IA-SUP)
Support to start-ups and SMEs making use of the Design Platform

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1. CONTEXT

The Chips Joint Undertaking is a public-private partnership that funds Research, Development and Innovation projects in Electronic Components and Systems, engaging finances from the EU, Chips JU Participating States and the participants (industry, academia, etc.).

The specificity of the Chips JU consists essentially in its tripartite funding scheme: the actions are indeed funded by the private sector supported by European grants and national grants (including in the latter cases possible funding from regional sources). Therefore, the proposals for Chips JU projects may have multiple funding sources:

- EU funding through Chips JU
- national/regional funding (through the Chips JU Participating States)

This multi-partite funding results in requirement adjustments, which are specific to Chips JU and differ in quite several aspects from the general Horizon programme.

This invitation to submit a Full Project Proposal aims to add a particular aspect to the Chips JU work programme, namely to manage a start-up and SME incubation and acceleration programme for early-stage fabless companies via Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP). FSTP recipients may be co-funded by National Funding Authorities (NFA) in the respective FSTP calls to be organised and implemented by the successful applicants to this invitation.

2. INTRODUCTION

This “Guide for applicants” provides the applicants with the necessary information and/or directs them to the appropriate sources of information necessary to prepare and submit the proposals for Chips JU Calls. It highlights the differences imposed by the Chips JU specificity, provides clarification where needed, and gives additional information on an important topic: how to reconcile the specificities of the Chips JU funding mechanism and the limitations resulted from the default setup of the submission tools which is based on the standard Horizon Europe programme (later called Horizon in this document).

The guide covers a part of the calls within Chips JU 2023-2027 Work Programme as described in Appendix 6, sub-section 2.1.3. “Support for start-ups and SMEs”. The calls are launched in accordance with the Chips JU 2023-2027 Work Programme and will be managed by the Chips Joint Undertaking (‘JU’).

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

This 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 opportunities ('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 are described in Appendix 6 of the Chips JU 2023-2027 Work Programme "Activities launched in 2025 for the Chips for Europe Initiative part" under sub-section 2.1.3. "Support for start-ups and SMEs".

As an important reminder, the proposers are advised to check the following when selecting the Call for their proposal. All related information is clearly presented on the Chips JU website and the Calls Pages in the Funding & tenders opportunities.

- Type of action (Chips IA-SUP)
- Type of Call – one stage (FPP) FSTP recipients co-funded with NFA

4. AVAILABLE BUDGET

The available budget is described in Appendix 6 of the Chips JU 2023-2027 Work Programme in section 1 and in sub-section 2.1.3.



It is important for applicants to carefully consider the available budget for the topic.

5. TIMETABLE AND DEADLINES

Proposals must be submitted before the Call **deadline**, which is:

- **14^h January 2026 at 17:00:00 Brussels time**

6. ADMISSIBILITY AND DOCUMENTS

Proposals must be submitted before the call deadline (see call deadlines in 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:

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

Admissibility conditions are indicated in Appendix 6 of the Chips JU 2023-2027 Work Programme “Activities launched in 2025 for the Chips for Europe initiative part” under sub-section 2.1.3.4.

7. ELIGIBILITY

The eligibility for the Calls for Proposals to the Non-Initiative Part are indicated in Appendix 6 of the Chips JU 2023-2027 Work Programme “Activities launched in 2025 for the Chips for Europe initiative part” under sub-section 2.1.3.5.

More information about eligibility can be found in the Work Programme General Annexes, Annex 1: “HORIZON Europe conditions applicable to Chips JU”.

As an important reminder, the proposers are advised to check the eligibility conditions when selecting the Call for their proposal:

- Eligibility at EU level - Specific eligibility conditions (JU Grant): Use of Article 198(f) of the Financial Regulation

8. FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL CAPACITY AND EXCLUSION

The financial and operational capacity and exclusion are in Appendix 6 of the Chips JU 2023-2027 Work Programme “Activities launched in 2025 for the Chips for Europe initiative part” under sub-section 2.1.3.6.

9. EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURE

The evaluation and selection procedure for the Calls for Proposals to the Non-Initiative Part are described in Appendix 6 of the Chips JU 2023-2027 Work Programme “Activities launched in 2025 for the Chips for Europe initiative part” under sub-section 2.1.3.7. Under sub-section 2.1.3.9. are listed:

- **The evaluation thresholds**
- **The evaluation criteria.** An evaluation form is also provided in the Calls Documents in case, applicants would like to self-check their proposal. The forms used by the experts for their

evaluation reports will be broadly similar, although the detail and layout may differ with respect to the criteria, scores and thresholds defined for the respective Calls as mentioned above.

Information on the outcome of the evaluations: The Horizon rules apply also to Chips JU Calls: i.e. 5 months from the final date of the submission.

The evaluation and selection procedures related to the Chips JU Calls are subject to the decision of the Governing Board of the Chips JU. The GB decision is included in the Calls documents and the applicants are invited to consult it when preparing their proposals.¹

As per the Chips JU PAB decision on the evaluation and selection procedures related to the Calls for Proposal (included in the respective Call's Documents) a possibility is given to the applicants to send a list of companies or experts that should not be assigned to the evaluation of their proposal – by email to calls@kdt-ju.europa.eu (together with a supporting justification).

10. AWARD CRITERIA

The award criteria for the Calls for Proposals to the Non-Initiative Part are described in Appendix 6 of the Chips JU 2023-2027 Work Programme "Activities launched in 2025 for the Chips for Europe initiative part" under sub-section 2.1.3.8.

10.1 LEGAL AND FINANCIAL SET-UP OF THE GRANT AGREEMENTS

Once your proposal has been selected for funding by the Chips JU PAB, 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](#).

As soon as the Chips JU PAB takes the funding decision, the coordinators of the proposals selected for funding are invited to start the GAP process using the electronic exchange system. The indicative date for the signature of the GA is 8 months from the final date of submission.



Please note that the Chips JU Calls do not foresee negotiations for the proposals selected for funding. Under the Chips JU during the Grant Agreement Preparation phase (GAP) there will however be a request-for-change procedure to align the national and EU sides of the proposals. The process will be concluded with the PAB decision for funding based on which the Grant Agreements are signed.

¹ Decision GB 2024.71

11. HOW TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION

All information concerning the Chips JU Calls is published on the [Chips JU website](#) and can be found under the menu “**Participate**” – including the links to the **Calls Pages** in the [Funding & tenders opportunities](#) (under “**Search Funding & Tenders**” / “**Grants**” / “**Horizon Europe**”). The electronic submission system has also an [online wizard](#) that guides the applicants step-by-step through the preparation of their proposal (“Grants”/“Applying for funding”/“Submit a proposal — Electronic Submission System”).

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

All information on the steps to follow in order to submit a proposal is available in the [Online Manual](#): For step by step tutorials with screenshots and short videos just click on  button. There are  for all phases of the process (registration of participants, create a draft proposal, fill in various parts in the submission tool, edit the proposal, add participants to the consortium, remove participants from the consortium).

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 EULogin 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 portal does not implement all funding rates of the Chips JU Calls. Therefore, the funding rate for the entities for-profit non-SMEs (i.e. large enterprises), the maximum grant amount computed by the portal does not reflect the applicable funding rate. The applicants need to compute their EU requested funding separately and input manually the figure in the portal. In any case, the SME status being checked through the SME self-assessment, requesting higher funding than that allowed by the funding rates from the Chips JU 2023-2027 Work Programme will not lead to higher effective funding.



It is essential that organisations that are eligible for the SME funding rate do not request less than what is allowed through the SME funding rate. Otherwise, given the budget constraints, it will most likely to correct such clerical mistakes during the Grant Agreement Preparation.

- **Part B** (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file. Applicants should upload in the Portal Submission System as a PDF file the initial single complete proposal following the appropriate template provided with the call documents.

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 contact form](#), 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.

12. 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](#) (see the bottom left corner on the figure below).

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).

Besides existing information as described in the previous sections, all the questions pertaining to the Chips JU Calls are to be addressed to the above-mentioned functional mailbox, which is continuously monitored by the Calls team, which does its best to provide an answer as soon as possible (in principle the same day if a workday).

13. 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 opportunities 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).

- **IA/RIA** — Innovation Action / Research and Innovation Action

- **CSA** — Support and Coordination Actions

The main difference between RIA and IA type of actions is the targeted TRLs (Technology Readiness Levels). The proposal's TRLs must match the Call's TRLs.

- **PO** — Project Outline phase of a 2-stage call, i.e. first phase.

It is BOTH Mandatory and GATING. Only the proposals that successfully pass the PO stage are invited to submit an FPP.

- **FPP** — Full Project Proposal. This is the final stage for both 1-stage and 2-stage calls.

- **Coordinator** — In Chips JU projects, 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.

- **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).

For the National Budgets Table the applicants have to follow the instructions given by their respective National Funding Authorities – see the Chips JU 2023-2027 Work Programme.

In the Part B of the proposal, the affiliated participants need to provide the same information as the main participants.

- **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.

- **Third country and International Organization** — Applicants from countries that are not members of the Chips JU are invited to consult the [List of Participating Countries in Horizon Europe](#) and the list of participants eligible for Chips JU funding published in the Funding & tenders opportunities in the General Annexes - section B which is available at [2], in order to check whether they are eligible or not for receiving funding in Chips JU projects.

- **Funding rate** — Chips JU grants usually differ from the funding rates of Horizon. They are clearly indicated in the respective Chips JU 2023-2027 Work Programme. They are also specific to the type of action addressed by the Calls (IA, RIA, CSA) and within the same call specific for various topics. The same is valid for the national funding rates.

Due to limitations of the submission tool the EU funding rates specific to Chips JU cannot be fully implemented and it requires specific actions for some of the applicants. Therefore, applicants must check the funding rate their organization(s) are entitled to as described in the Chips JU Annual Work Programme. In case the funding rate that appears in the Budget table in the Part A does not correspond to the funding rate indicated in the Work programme (i.e. when it is lower than the maximum funding rate that appears in the table), they have to calculate outside the submission portal the amount of EU funding using the Funding rate from the Work Programme and manually fill in this calculated amount in the budget table in the column named “Requested EU contribution to eligible costs”

- **SME** — Small and Medium Enterprise

The European definition for an SME is used – see for more information the SME user guide³. In order for a legal entity to receive the funding percentage for SMEs, the legal entity needs to be validated in the system as an SME with a validation date not older than 2 years.

If a legal entity is not yet validated as an SME in the system or the information is older than 2 years (counting back from the year the Call is published), the LEAR (Legal Entity Appointed Representative) of the respective organization will have to complete the SME Self-Assessment step – see for more information the SME Self-Assessment User Guide.

For the proposal submission the self-declared SME status is sufficient. However, if the proposal is selected for funding the LEAR of the respective SME will have to complete the SME self-assessment when the Grant Agreement Preparation (GAP) starts. Failure to do so will result in applying the funding rate of the for-profit non-SME entities (large enterprise). Also, if the result of the self-assessment is that the organization is not an SME according to the EU definition, the funding rate applied will also be that of the large enterprise (for-profit non-SME) during the GAP step.

- **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.

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-13-general-annexes_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf

³ [The revised user guide to the SME definition \(2020\)](#): SME self-assessment questionnaire

In line with the Horizon Rules for Participation and the Chips JU Grant Agreement, the beneficiaries are required to conclude a consortium agreement. It shall be concluded before the signature of the Chips JU GA.

Payments of the Chips JU Grant follow the rules of Horizon, which means that practically Chips JU transfers the money due (prefinancing, interim payments, payment of balance) to the Project Coordinator, which will further distribute it to the beneficiaries in the consortium. It is therefore highly advisable especially for the coordinator to ensure that sufficient and proper provisions are included in the Consortium Agreement with respect to payments handling and minimizing financial risk within the consortium.

- **Grant Agreement** — All the projects funded by Chips JU ARE REQUIRED to sign a Grant Agreement. The Model Grant Agreement is published on the Calls pages together with the other Call Documents. The document is not subject to any changes, and it must be signed as such (no negotiation possible on provisions, wording, etc.). Depending on the specific situation of each project some provisions may or may not be applicable.

- **Collaboration Agreement** — For the Calls/Topics that foresee “Linked Actions” the beneficiaries are required to conclude collaboration agreements in line with the respective options under Article 3 and Article 7 of the Model Grant Agreement.

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully.

- **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.

- **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.

- **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 opportunities Privacy Statement](#).