

Guide for Applicants and Frequently Asked Questions

Version	Dated	Published	Changes made in section(s)
1.0		19.01.2022	n.a.
1.1	31.01.2022	02.02.2022	10, 13 a.), 13 c.) Updated segments are marked in yellow
1.2	04.02.2022	04.02.2022	14 Updated segments are marked in yellow
1.3	18.02.2022	18.02.2022	13 a.) updated segments are marked in turquoise

Contents

Guide for Applicants and Frequently Asked Questions.....	1
1. What is EU4DigitalSME?	2
2. What is the objective of the Call for Proposal?	2
3. What are Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs)?	4
4. Are there any limitations towards the sector, topic or technological focus of the proposed DIH?5	
5. What does EU4DigitalSME offer for selected proposals?.....	5
6. Who are we looking for?.....	6
7. What are potential services and activities of a Digital Innovation Hub?.....	7
8. What is the foreseen Timeline?	7
9. How to apply?	9
10. What kind of application support does EU4DigitalSME offer?	10
11. Can an applicant be part of more than one consortium?.....	11
12. What happens if I do not submit my application within the deadline?	11
13. How will we evaluate your proposal?.....	11
(a) Administrative and initial eligibility check	11
(b) Quality Check	12
(c) Full eligibility check	15
14. Conflict of Interest	17
15. Communication Flow	18
16. Contracting.....	18
17. Complaints	18
18. Questions and Answers.....	18

1. What is EU4DigitalSME?

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) are under growing competitive pressure. To meet increasing competitive demands, SMEs need to boost innovation and digitalisation through greater use of technology in order to improve productivity, increase efficiency and reduce costs. As modern digital technologies offer opportunities for increasing the long-term competitiveness of local businesses, the digital transformation of the economy based on information and communications technologies (ICT), hence constitutes an important factor for economic growth and development in BiH.

The “EU4DigitalSME” project is aimed at creating an enabling environment for SMEs to successfully undertake digitalisation and innovation transformations. Through better access to innovative technologies, skills and services across value chains, the project supports the creation of a conducive business environment for technological transformation of SMEs in competitive sectors. This will result in an increased performance of companies, in particular SMEs, start-ups and mid-caps, to become more competitive with regard to their business/production processes, products and services by using digital technologies.

Besides addressing the digital transformation needs of SMEs, the project also involves actors at the macro level to improve the overall framework conditions for the promotion of innovations and digitalisation of SMEs. As such, the project supports the development of a more beneficial operational framework for innovative business models, thus strengthening Bosnia and Herzegovina's capacities for collaborating on advanced technology solutions in joint regional and EU projects, following EU best-practices, including support to set up Digital Innovation Hubs.

EU4DigitalSME is a Multi-Donor Action jointly co-financed by the European Union and the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented as part of the BMZ project “Strengthening Innovation and Digitalisation in SMEs in BiH”. GIZ activities will be complemented by the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which will provide intermediated financing and direct advisory services to SMEs.

2. What is the objective of the Call for Proposal?

Within the broader scope to build a common digital innovation ecosystem, EU4DigitalSME launches a Call for Proposals to support the formation and functionality of three (3)¹ Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) in BiH.

The DIHs are expected to drive the digital transformation of SMEs across BiH and build regional innovation ecosystems around them. In addition, DIHs should also be closely linked to the European network of Digital Innovation Hubs to foster technology and knowledge transfer through collaborating in regional or EU research and innovation projects.

Through the Call for Proposal EU4DigitalSME seeks to identify capable partners with promising DIH proposals, outlining their envisioned support for the digitalization of SMEs. Successful applicants will receive technical and financial support for the design and development of fully operational DIHs.

Overall, the DIHs are intended to constitute key elements of a common digital innovation ecosystem in BiH, improving the competitiveness of the local economy by facilitating the uptake

¹ The EU4DigitalSME project reserves the right to change the number of supported DIH depending on the quality of submitted applications.

of digital technologies in SMEs and fostering technology and knowledge transfer. The supported DIH are expected to be operational by December 2022.

3. What are Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs)?

In the understanding of the EU4DigitalSME project, DIHs are defined as “a single organization or a coordinated group of organizations with complementary expertise and a public benefit objective offering a set of services and activities that support SMEs in their digital transformation and innovation efforts acting as a central point of contact/expertise.”

The objective of DIHs is to support SMEs with the uptake of digital and innovative technologies. They are seen as a core mechanism to create a strong, collaborative regional innovation ecosystem through providing access to a wide range of services, facilities and expertise offered by DIH partners. The aim is to ensure that individual SMEs receive the services they need, that targeted sectors get access to innovative, scalable solutions and that stakeholders cooperate with each other at a regional, national and/or pan-European level. In order to support SMEs in their digital transformation, DIHs provide a set of services in the following areas (see Fig. 1):

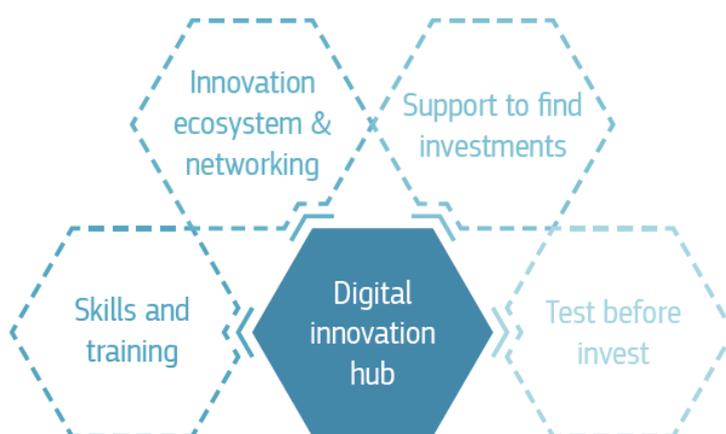
The first set of services are the technological services (1), supporting the development of new innovations based on technological infrastructure and expertise. This is often referred to as “test before invest” function but could include everything from testing to support in R&D collaborative projects.

Next to the technology services, the uptake of technologies also requires business services (2). These will help an SME to adjust its organization and actions to the market and the changes brought by digitization (including supporting access to finance).

DIHs also offers skills and training (3) as another service area. This ensures that their customers have the capacities and capabilities to implement the new technologies. Skills and training are horizontal, covering skills in technology, business and ecosystem related topics.

Lastly, DIHs also function as a connector in the region and offer ecosystem services (4), to boost the regional innovation ecosystem. Focused on a specific technology, DIHs bring together different stakeholders in an innovation relay game to ensure a collaborative network of partners, ultimately enhancing the quality of the collaboration in the region.

Fig 1.: Overview of DIH service areas:



Source: Kalpaka et al. (2020): Digital Innovation Hubs as policy instruments to boost digitalisation of SMEs²

It is crucial that a DIH provides a portfolio of services, including technological, ecosystem and business support functions. Only by providing this mixed portfolio DIHs can address the different needs of companies in their digital transformation. The offered services should thereby

² For more information on the Digital Innovation Hub concept please refer to Kalpaka et al. (2020): Digital Innovation Hubs as policy instruments to boost digitalisation of SMEs. <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC121604>

be modeled on activities and expertise already being provided by the DIH partners, as well as interlinked in a way that creates added value compared to partners acting by themselves. An important principle that should be observed in the process of developing a service portfolio for the DIH is that it should not compete with or replace services already provided by existing third parties. Rather, the DIH should integrate the services of market providers – while itself developing only those services that the market does not provide.

In addition, DIH are expected to provide a public benefit, meaning DIHs are expected to contribute to existing local and regional policies and strategies in the areas of digitalization and innovation according to the DIH's technological capabilities and specialization areas, resulting in benefits for the society. This includes strengthening the competitiveness of its target users, improving employment conditions and activating entrepreneurship, building digital capacity, as well as contributing to the creation of a regional digital innovation ecosystem. This can for instance be achieved by proactively collaborating with the public sector in designing policies and strategies in the DIH's respective area of expertise.

4. Are there any limitations towards the sector, topic or technological focus of the proposed DIH?

NO, the Call for Proposal is designed to be sector- and technology-agnostic, meaning EU4DigitalSME welcomes all constructive applications from any sector, topic or technological focus. For an indicative list of sectors, topics or technological focus please review section 7 of this document.

5. What does EU4DigitalSME offer for selected proposals?

Via this call for proposal EU4DigitalSME will select **suitable proposals for the creation of Digital Innovation Hubs in Bosnia and Herzegovina**. Successful applicants with selected proposals will receive the following benefits:

- ✓ Comprehensive training program on the creation, set-up and management of Digital Innovation Hubs,
- ✓ Individual and continuous support on the creation, set up and management of Digital Innovation Hubs (as described in [Kalpaka et al. 2020](#)),
- ✓ A Mentor in form of an already fully operational DIH, to support the mentee in networking with other DIHs, investors, innovative entrepreneurs, potential customers, etc.,
- ✓ Coaching on proposal writing, consortia & project management for national and international funding-lines,
- ✓ Support in development of up to 5 draft proposal per DIH for national or international funding-lines,
- ✓ Facilitation of connections and collaborations with EBRD,
- ✓ Exchange with DIHs and other relevant players in the European Union and/or Western Balkan, Eastern partnership countries, tailored to the sector/topic of the respective BiH DIH (e.g.: conference, study trip, etc.),
- ✓ Financial support for the reimbursement of the costs for setting up structures, processes and logistics in the Digital Innovation Hubs, service development/provision, staffing, equipment (i.e. facilities, websites, dissemination materials, legal and IPR

consultancy services, administrative support), as well as for travel and accommodation costs.

Non-selected proposals with sufficient potential and quality might be eligible to receive a short-term training.

6. Who are we looking for?

We are looking for **organizations**, such as, but not limited to,

- ✓ Research and/or Technology Organizations (RTOs),
- ✓ Technology and/or Innovation Centers,
- ✓ Science, Technology and/or Innovation Parks,
- ✓ Entrepreneurship Support Organizations (Incubators, Accelerators, Investors, etc.),
- ✓ Business Support Organizations (Chambers of Commerce, Sectoral Associations, etc.),
- ✓ Innovative companies / private Technology Providers, cutting edge technology focused Small and Medium sized enterprises (SMEs),
- ✓ Development Agencies and Organizations (Economic, Regional, SME, Industrial and/or Technological Development),
- ✓ Technological Development, Research and/or Innovation Foundations/NGOs,
- ✓ Universities/faculties and/or university/faculty-based research centers
- ✓ Vocational Training Institutes,
- ✓ Industrial Clusters, IT-related associations/companies,
- ✓ Public or private funding/finance organizations.

The establishment of a Digital Innovation Hub is a collaborative process that requires a clear understanding and commitment between its members. Therefore, above mentioned organizations, willing to either individually³ or by forming a consortium, in order to create and operate a DIH in BiH, should:

- ✓ Be willing and capable to assume the position of local digital and innovation **orchestrators** who will work collaboratively with all the other local players (e.g. governments, industry, finance sector, technology actors, academia, and social organizations), for which they must be adequate and recognized by these players.
- ✓ Have a high degree of **technical and sectoral expertise** and understanding on how to **apply this expertise** (providing services), **knowledge and expertise to advise and support SMEs in accessing different opportunities for additional funding**, as well as experience in fostering competitive enterprises in their regions.
- ✓ Ability to provide the necessary (complementary) expertise and knowledge to establish an effective and well-functioning DIH. Applicants can have complementary digital or non-digital technologies specialization areas.
- ✓ Serve the interest of the general public and not (primarily) to support profit-making interests.
- ✓ Provide services to SMEs to support their digital transformation and innovation.
- ✓ Willing to **collaboratively** operate the DIH.

*Throughout the document and unless otherwise indicated, **applicant** refers to both, individual applicants as well as to groups of applicants.*

³ Single applicants must cover all these aspects by themselves.

7. What are potential services and activities of a Digital Innovation Hub?

An indicative overview of potential services and activities offered by a DIH to its clients and partners are listed in the following⁴:

	Services	Activities
Ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community building - Skills, training, education - Strategy development - Ecosystem learning - Representation, promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scouting, brokerage, awareness creation, dissemination, ecosystem building - Market intelligence, market assessments, road-mapping, technology watch - Workshops, seminars to share knowledge and experience - Representing interests during meetings & conferences, organizing (country) visits, roadshows
Test before Invest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic R&D - Contract research - Technical support on scale-up - Provision of tech infrastructure - Testing, measuring and validation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joint, pre-competitive R&D, secondment from companies - Specific R&D, technology concept development, proof of concept - Concept validation, prototyping, small series production - Renting equipment, low rate production, platform technology infrastructure, Lab facilities - Certification, product demonstration, product qualification
Find Investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incubator/accelerator support - Access to finance - Project development - Offering housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Voice of Customer, market assessment, business development, legal. IPR, location, sales strategy - Financial engineering, connection to funding sources, investment plans - Identification of opportunities, creating consortia, development of proposals - Office space and space for experimentation and pilot manufacturing - Concept Validation and specific Product Measuring
Skills & Training	Specialized courses on ecosystem/technology/business, strategy development on topic education	

8. What is the foreseen Timeline?

The Call for Proposal opens on January 19th, 2022. The Deadline for submitting applications is February 28th, 2022, 23:59:59 hours (Sarajevo time).

During this period applicants are offered a range of support services. (see section 10).

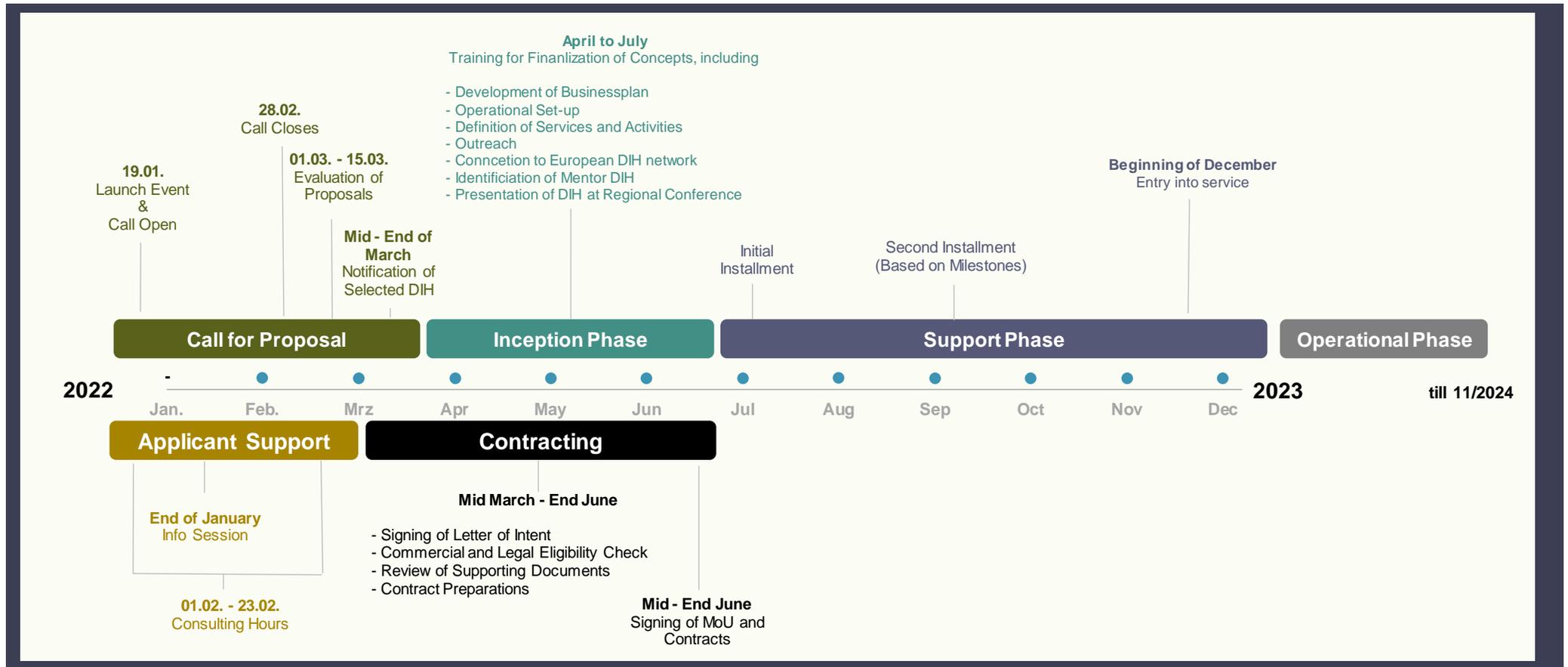
After the Call for Proposal is closed, submitted applications are reviewed and the most promising proposal are selected (see section 13).

Following the selection of the most promising proposals, these proposals will receive various support measures for the design, development and operation of a DIH. All DIH proposals supported by EU4DigitalSME are expected to enter into service delivery latest by December 2022.

⁴ Based on: <https://eufordigital.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Digital-Innovation-Hubs-Network-DIHNET.EU-and-DIHNET-online-community.pdf>. To gain an overview of various DIHs, their activities and specifications, please have a look at the [European Commission's Digital Innovation Hub catalogue](#).

An overview of the envisaged timeline can be gained from the graphic below (Fig. 2).

Fig 2: Indicative Timeline for the Call for Proposal and the Establishment of the DIHs



9. How to apply?

The **Call for Proposal opens on 19th January 2022 and closes on 28th February 2022, 23:59:59 hours (Sarajevo time)**. During this period, applicants can submit their proposal.

Proposals are to be submitted via the [Submission Form](#) within the above stated deadline.

Proposals submitted by any other means than the Submission Form will not be considered eligible.

Fig. 3: Submission form on the Call for Proposal website

Name of the (lead) applicant*

Name of proposed Digital Innovation Hub*:

E-mail address of contact person*:

Application form*

Application form should be submitted in pdf form and cannot be larger than 2 MB

Choose file NO FILE CHOSEN

Supporting documents*

All supporting documents should be compressed in one archive, either with extension .rar or .zip, and uploaded here as one attachment. Size of attachment cannot be larger than 16 MB

Choose file NO FILE CHOSEN

Partnership Agreement

Applicable only if proposal is submitted on behalf of consortium. Attached document should be submitted in pdf form and cannot be larger than 2 MB

Choose file NO FILE CHOSEN

I agree with [privacy policy](#)

APPLY NOW

The Submission form consists of 6 sections. The first 3 sections refer to the basic identification of proposals. Meaning, the (lead) applicant needs to indicate his official name as an organisation, name of the proposed Digital Innovation Hub in the prepared proposal, as well as e-mail address of contact person, which will be used for official communication between the entity submitting proposal and EU4DigitalSME project.

The next 3 sections are reserved for the upload of relevant proposal documents, namely Application Form, Supporting documents and Partnership Agreement. All sections have instructions concerning format and size in which they need to be submitted. The Application Form needs to be submitted as a pdf document and cannot be

larger than 2 MB. Supporting documents (see section 13.a of this document) are uploaded as a single compressed archive, either with extension .zip or .rar, and with maximum size of 16 MB. Partnership Agreement needs to be submitted as a pdf document, with maximum size of 2MB.

All sections of the Submission Form are mandatory, with an exception to Partnership Agreement, which is mandatory only in case of proposals submitted on behalf of partnerships.

Once all fields in the submission form are filled out, and before the (lead) applicant is able to submit the proposal by selecting the „APPLY NOW“-button, agreement with privacy policy needs to be confirmed.

Applicants are encouraged to submit their proposals a few days prior to the submission deadline to avoid any potential problems during the submission process.

Proposals must be written in English and all sections of application form need to be filled out in order for the proposal to be eligible. The data provided should be up to date, truthful, exhaustive, as well as consistent and should allow for a complete assessment of the proposal.

For any proposal submitted, the single applicant or respectively the lead applicant for a consortium, acts as the main contact with the EU4DigitalSME project. It is the (lead) applicant's responsibility to ensure the timely submission of the proposals. Final submissions of proposals are only allowed to be made by a representative of the lead applicant in order to avoid duplicate submissions.

A proposal can only be submitted once. Any modifications of the proposals after the submission are not possible and will not be taken into account. We thus advise applicants to thoroughly review their proposal, as well as use the checklist in the application form before submitting.

10. What kind of application support does EU4DigitalSME offer?

In order to support applicants in this process, the EU4DigitalSME project will offer certain support services:

(A) Webinar – “Info & Q&A”:

Following the launch event on January 19th, 2022, the EU4DigitalSME project offers an additional “Info & Q&A” online webinar. The “Info & Q&A” webinar will take place on Wednesday, January 26th, 2022, from 10-11.30 am. To participate, we kindly ask you to register via the [Registration Form](#). After registering, you will receive an invite, including the MS Teams meeting details.

The information provided in the launch event and the webinar are the same. However, the “Info and Q&A” webinar offers interested parties the opportunity to address open points directly with the EU4DigitalSME team and clarify open questions.

The session will be recorded and made public on this [website](#). By registering, you consent to the event being recorded.

The session will be held in B/H/S language.

Participation in the launch event or the “Info & Q&A” webinar is neither mandatory to be selected nor will it in any circumstances automatically lead to the proposal being selected.

(B) Weekly consulting session

In the timeframe 01.02.2022 to 23.02.2022 the project will offer a weekly consulting session. During this timeframe, applicants can book up to two timeslots, 30min each, to ask questions and consult on bilateral issues. Applicants are given the opportunity to receive technical feedback on specific sections of their draft proposals. The feedback provided will not focus on the specific content or idea of the proposal. **The consulting sessions are held in English language.**

The sessions will be held weekly on Tuesdays and Wednesdays in the timeframe 09h00 to 12h00 CET. Registrations for timeslots will be accepted either through the [Schedule a Consultation Form on the Call for Proposal website](#) up to 48 hours prior to the actual meeting. In order for the EU4DigitalSME team to prepare and provide effective advice, we kindly ask applicants to include the topics to be discussed in the registration form.

Participation in the launch event, the “Info & Q&A” webinar, as well as consulting session(s) is neither mandatory nor will it in any circumstances lead to the proposal being automatically selected.

11. Can an applicant be part of more than one consortium?

Applicants and proposal partners can only be part of one consortium. In case a member is part of two consortia both proposals are automatically excluded from the evaluation process.

12. What happens if I do not submit my application within the deadline?

Applications after the deadline will not be accepted. We strongly encourage applicants not to wait until the last minute to submit their proposals. Failure of meeting the submission deadline for any reason, including extenuating circumstances, will result in the rejection of the proposal.

13. How will we evaluate your proposal?

The evaluation process is transparent, fair, and equal to all our participants. For this Call for Proposal, we are looking for the best fit for our project, and since we put emphasis on quality rather than quantity, we suggest applicants to put effort into presenting their proposal in the best possible way, providing as much detail as they can to support the [EU4DigitalSME project](#) while evaluating applications and identifying the main key points and their fit with the overall EU4DigitalSME scope. The proposal evaluation will be performed through the steps below:

After the deadline for submission of proposals, each proposal goes through several checks, namely **(a) administrative and initial eligibility check** and **(b) quality check**, and subsequently **(c) eligibility check**.

(a) Administrative and initial eligibility check

The administrative check is performed internally by the EU4DigitalSME Team. During the administrative check of proposals, the following will be assessed:

- Has the deadline been met? If not, the proposal will automatically be rejected.
- Has the proposal been submitted through the predefined [Submission Form on the Call for Proposal website](#)? If not, the proposal will automatically be rejected.
- Whether the proposal package meets all the criteria set out in the checklist of the application form (see below):
 1. The correct application form, prepared for this Call for proposals, has been used.
 2. The application form is filled in using word-processing software, digitally readable and in English language
 3. The Declaration by the (lead) applicant has been filled in and signed.
 4. The Declaration of partner/-s has been filled in and signed by all partner (this criterion is not applicable if no partners take part in the proposal).
 5. Partnership agreement between the lead applicant and all partners in the proposal is signed and stamped by all partners and enclosed (this criterion is not applicable if no partners take part in the proposal).
 6. Supporting documents as part of the initial package of documentation are prepared/obtained and enclosed, namely:
 - Scanned original or scanned certified photocopy of Tax registration certificate with ID number
[Skeniranoriginal ili skenirana ovjerena fotokopija uvjerenja o poreznoj registraciji sa ID brojem]

- Scanned original or scanned certified photocopy of the latest decision on registration for the lead applicant (for business entities and non-profit organizations)
[Skeniran original ili skenirana ovjerena fotokopija trenutnog/aktuelnog rješenja o registraciji za vodećeg aplikanta (za poslovne subjekte i neprofitne organizacije)]
- Scanned original or scanned certified photocopy of the Notice on the classification of a legal entity according to the classification of activities issued by the competent statistical authority for the applicant
[Skeniran original ili skenirana ovjerena fotokopija posljednjeg obavještenja o razvrstavanju pravnog lica prema klasifikaciji djelatnosti izdatog od strane nadležnog statističkog organa]
- Scanned original or scanned certified photocopy of the balance sheet and income statement of the lead applicant for 2019 and 2020, and if available semi-annual reports for 2021⁵ (certified by APIF and AFIP, respectively)
[Skeniran original ili skenirana ovjerena fotokopija bilansa stanja i bilansa uspjeha vodećeg aplikanta za 2019. i 2020. godinu, te, ukoliko je dostupan, polugodišnji izvještaj za 2021. godinu (ovjeren od strane APIF-a odnosno AFIP-a)]
- Scanned Statutes and acts on the establishment of the lead applicant
[Skenirani statuti i akti o osnivanju vodećeg aplikanta]
- For publicly funded institutions only: Scanned budget for 2019, 2020 and 2021
[Za institucije finansirane javnim sredstvima: skenirani budžet za 2019., 2020. i 2021. godinu]

All supporting documents will be checked and information in them will be compared with information provided in the Application form. In case of there are discrepancies, the proposal will be rejected.

7. The application form and all supporting documents are in electronic form
8. The proposed (physical) location for the Digital Innovation Hub is in Bosnia and Herzegovina
9. The lead applicant as an organization has at least eight (8) full time staff collaborators, or, in case of a consortium, the lead applicant has at least five (5) full time staff collaborators and the partnership consortium overall has at least ten (10) full time staff collaborators.

If any of the above information is incorrect or any specified document is missing, the proposal will be rejected solely on the ground that it has not met the administrative check. The proposal will thus not be further considered.

(b) Quality Check

This check is performed by external evaluators, (referred to as **evaluators** from here on). Each proposal is going to be evaluated separately and independently by two evaluators. The score of individual proposal can amount up to 100 points and is assessed according to the following pre-determined evaluation criteria:

Proposals are assessed against six (6) evaluation criteria:

RELEVANCE: Extent to which the proposal clearly addresses specific and actual needs of SMEs in their digital transformation process, opportunities for reinforcing and securing the digital innovation ecosystem in the region, its forethought to potential challenges, its alignment

⁵ Please note that selected proposals/applicants are obliged to submit original balance sheets and income statements for 2021 at the later stage of the application process.

with the objectives of this call, as well as the proposal's ability to foster private sector development through tackling market failures and other major challenges, which hamper digitalization of SMEs.

CAPACITY: This criterion assesses, whether the lead applicant has sufficient capacities, experience and technical expertise to ensure an effective, efficient and impactful implementation and management of the project. In addition, it also evaluates the proposed organizational structure, as to the degree to which it is beneficial to the achievement of the proposal's objectives.

EXPERTISE: This criterion evaluates the expertise of the consortium, meaning its members' maturity, capacity, and experience, including the one in its specialization areas. It moreover assesses the teams' qualifications to participate and carry out the work to set-up the DIH, the soundness of their participation proposal and the resources provided for it. In summary, the criterion assesses, if applicants demonstrate a clear understanding of DIH and outline either already existing or a clear pathway to develop required (digital) capacities to successfully manage and operate a DIH.

APPROACH: Assesses the viability of the implementation, in terms of coherence and clarity of proposed work plan, ability to reach target group, set-up to deliver results and outcomes, as well as achievability of milestones and deliverables. Identified complementarities and synergies between the partners are also evaluated regarding their contribution to the project implementation. Lastly, the proposed activities and services are reviewed to determine the extent to which they are conducive to achieving the intended results.

BUSINESS MODEL: Evaluates the viability and long-term sustainability of the proposed business model, including financial plan, sales strategies for services and activities and ideas to attract additional private or public funds.

PUBLIC BENEFIT: Extent to which, the proposed DIH contributes existing local and regional policies and strategies in the areas of digitalization and innovation according to the DIH's technological capabilities and specialization areas, as well as strengthens the competitiveness of its target users resulting in benefits for the society, improve the employment conditions and activate entrepreneurship, build digital capacity, and contribute to the creation of a regional digital innovation ecosystem.

Evaluation table

Section	Max. score
1. Relevance	15
1.1. How relevant is the proposal to identified problems/challenges in targeted sectors/areas of operation/location/regional contexts?	5
1.2. How relevant is the proposal to defined target group / users of services?	5
1.3. How relevant is the proposal to the achievement of the goals of the Call for Proposal and the overarching EU4DigitalSMEs project?	5
2. Overall operational and management capacity	15
2.1. Lead applicant (and Consortia partners) has sufficient experience and technical expertise in project management .	5
2.2. Lead applicant (and Consortia partners) has sufficient management capacity (including staff, equipment and ability to manage a DIH).	5
2.3 Proposal clearly describes how the proposed DIH will be organized and how its structure will look like. Proposed DIH structure seems appropriate for the envisioned activities and goals.	5

3. Thematic expertise and capacity	25
3.1. Proposal clearly describes the context in which the proposed DIH will operate (initial situation, core issues and challenges clearly defined)	5
3.2. Applicant has sufficient initial knowledge base/skills set and experience, related to DIHs envisioned services.	5
3.3. Proposed partners and external cooperating structures have sufficient initial knowledge base/skills set and experience, related to DIHs envisioned services. Respective strengths of partners are sufficiently illustrated and synergies in the cooperation is evident.	5
3.4. Applicant, proposed partners and external cooperating structures have sufficient infrastructure and equipment available to set-up/offer DIHs envisioned services.	5
3.5. Applicant and proposed partners demonstrate a clear and robust added-value for the target group/service users. User/beneficiary base is described in detail (quantified, localized, etc.)	5
4. Approach	25
4.1. Proposal sufficiently describes the role of proposed DIH in respect to 4 main pillars of services as defined by the EU concept on Digital innovation hubs – test before invest, skills and training, support to find investment, and innovation ecosystem and networking.	5
4.2. Activities related to management, institutionalization and sustainability of proposed DIH are appropriate, practical and consistent with the described role of fully functional proposed DIH.	5
4.3. Activities related to development of DIH's services are appropriate, practical and consistent with the described role of a fully functional proposed DIH.	5
4.4. Activities related to positioning the DIH as recognizable institution (one-point-of-contact) for support to SMEs and other users in related digitalization and innovation frame of work are appropriate, practical, and consistent with the described role of a fully functional proposed DIH.	5
4.5. Activities related to establishment of synergies and complementarities on a level of DIH members, as well as on local, regional, national and international level are appropriate, practical, and consistent with the described role of a fully functioning proposed DIH.	5
5. Business model of proposed DIH and sustainability	10
5.1. Business model of proposed DIH realistically ensures overall sustainability of DIH beyond the phase of support coming from EU4DigitalSME project?	5
5.2. Proposal includes information on other fundraising and development approaches, that will be pursued to increase chances of long-term sustainability and functionality of the proposed DIH.	5
6. Public benefit and added value	10
6.1. Proposal sufficiently elaborates its contribution to public benefit and/or existing policies and strategies in the areas of digitalization and innovation, environment and green economy, the promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities or the needs of people with disabilities and other marginalized groups?	5
6.2. Proposed consortium has or has identified collaborations that can be regarded as beneficial for creation of a network of digital innovation hubs in the country, region and/or Europe or creation of mutual inter-exchange leading to product or results of added value both for involved parties and/or their users?	5
Maximum scoring	100

The evaluators will score each award criterion on a scale from 0 to 5:

- 0 = Proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information
- 1 = Poor – criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses
- 2 = Fair – proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses
- 3 = Good – proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present
- 4 = Very good – proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present
- 5 = Excellent – proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Each evaluator will produce an Individual Evaluation Report. The final score will be calculated as an average of the individual assessments provided by the Evaluators.

If the total score of one of the evaluation criteria is less than 60% of the possible points, the proposal is rejected. If the scoring is zero (0) or 1 (one) for at least one of the subsections within sections 1-6, the proposal will also be rejected.

After conducting evaluation of proposals, evaluators are invited to a “Consensus Meeting” to present their analysis to the technical team of the EU4DigitalSME project and justify the scoring according to each criterion above. This provides the opportunity to adjust the scoring or come to a consensus, if there are significant deviations in the scoring.

If the difference in scoring between two evaluators in individual proposal is above 30% then a third evaluator is invited to evaluate specific proposal. All three evaluators are subsequently invited to an additional meeting at which a final decision on the number of points is made.

In case of ties, the following criteria will be used to rank the proposals, in order:

- First: Capacity Score
- Second: Expertise Score
- Third: Relevance Score
- Fourth: Approach Score

Based on the scoring of all submitted proposals, a ranking list of proposals is generated. The list ranks all proposals according to achieved score (descending list from top-most score) and classifies them into **recommended** (top 3 ranked proposals), **reserve** (proposals achieved a score of 60 or more but below top 3 ranked) and **rejected** (proposals scored less than 60 point or rejected for any other justifiable reason).

The evaluation of the proposal is expected to take place in Early/Mid-March 2022. Applicants can expect to hear back on how their proposal scored by the end of March (see Fig. 2).⁶

(c) Full eligibility check

Full eligibility check is performed internally by the EU4DigitalSME team and refers only to applicants, whose proposals are classified as **recommended** after administrative and quality check. Those applicants will be invited to submit the **subsequent package of supporting documentation**. These proposals will potentially be supported by the EU4DigitalSME project and therefore **MUST** provide all necessary documentation for contracting purposes. The (lead) applicant is required to pass a record of commercial and legal eligibility check, which includes among other things:

⁶ The EU4DigitalSME project reserves the right to change the timeline and would inform about this step on the [Call for Proposal website](#).

- The existence of an electronic bookkeeping system
- Existing time recording system
- Records of income and expenditure as well as proper annual financial statements
- Existence of written rules for procurement of goods and services
- Existence of internal and external controls

In order to verify this, (lead) applicant will be invited to provide the following documentation:

1. Scanned original or scanned certified photocopy of the certificate of paid tax liabilities and contributions issued by the competent authority not older than three months, counting from the day of expiration of the deadline for submission of applications.
[Skenirani original ili skenirana ovjerenja o izmirenim poreskim obavezama i obavezama doprinosa izdatog od strane nadležnog organa ne starije od tri mjeseca, računajući od dana isteka krajnjeg roka za podnošenje prijave.]
2. Scanned original or scanned certified photocopy of the certificate of settled obligations issued by the competent unit of the Indirect Taxation Authority of BiH (only for VAT payers), for the applicant, not older than three months, counting from the deadline for submission project proposals.
[Skenirani original ili skenirana ovjerenja o izmirenim obavezama izdatog od strane nadležne jedinice Uprave za indirektno oporezivanje BiH (samo za obveznike PDV-a), za aplikanta, ne starije od tri mjeseca, računajući od dana isteka krajnjeg roka za podnošenje prijedloga projekata.]
3. Scanned evidence that the lead applicant and his partners have not been convicted in criminal proceedings of a criminal offense of organized crime, corruption, fraud, or money laundering, in accordance with the regulations in force in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
[Dokaz da vodeći aplikant i njegovi partneri, u krivičnom postupku nisu osuđeni pravosnažnom presudom za krivična djela organizovanog kriminala, korupciju, prevaru ili pranje novca, u skladu sa važećim propisima u Bosni i Hercegovini.]
4. Scanned proof that the lead applicant and his partners are not bankrupt, or are not subject to bankruptcy proceedings, in accordance with the regulations in force in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
[Dokaz da vodeći aplikant i njegovi partneri nisu pod stečajem, ili nisu predmet stečajnog postupka, u skladu sa važećim propisima u Bosni i Hercegovini]
5. If the lead applicant has concluded an agreement on rescheduling of obligations, i.e. deferred payment, based on contributions for pension and disability insurance, health insurance, direct and indirect taxes, they are obliged to submit a scanned confirmation from the competent institution/s that they are settling their rescheduled obligations in the foreseen dynamics. If the lead applicant has concluded an agreement on rescheduling of obligations or deferred payment of obligations and made only one payment of obligations, immediately before the submission of the application, they will not be considered to perform their obligations and the application will be rejected.
[U slučaju da vodeći aplikant imaju zaključen sporazum o reprogramu obaveza, odnosno odgođenom plaćanju, po osnovu doprinosa za penzijsko-invalidsko osiguranje, zdravstveno osiguranje, direktne i indirektno poreze, dužni su dostaviti potvrdu nadležne institucije/a da u predviđenoj dinamici izmiruju svoje reprogramirane obaveze. Ukoliko je vodeći aplikant zaključio sporazum o reprogramu obaveza ili odgođenom plaćanju obaveza i izvršio samo jednu uplatu obaveza, neposredno prije dostave aplikacije, neće se smatrati da u predviđenoj dinamici izvršavaju svoje obaveze i aplikacija će biti odbačena.]

6. Scanned original of the Legal Entity form filled in and signed by the lead applicant. A template for the document will be provided to selected proposals by the EU4DigitalSME project after the quality check.
7. Scanned original of the Financial Identification form filled in and signed by the lead applicant. A template for the document will be provided to selected proposals by the EU4DigitalSME project after the quality check.
8. If the applicant or one of the partners is a non-profit organization operating in the treasury system, he submits scanned appropriate forms from the general ledger of the treasury.
[Ukoliko je podnosilac prijave ili neko od partnera organizacija neprofitnog karaktera koja posluje u sistemu trezorskog poslovanja, tada ne dostavlja bilanse, već odgovarajuće obrasce iz glavne knjige trezora.]

Remark: EU4DigitalSME Project reserves the right to request from applicant and/or Consortia any additional document to those mentioned above, if relevant for contracting purposes. Additionally, the project may conduct a visit to applicants if found necessary to verify actual facts/situation presented in the proposal.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee comprised of representatives from the EU Delegation, GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH), and the EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) jointly assess recommended proposals that positively met all 3-step evaluation check process, and grants final approval regarding direct support to those proposals by the EU4DigitalSME project. The Steering Committee might have valid reasons for objecting to a specific application, like the alignment with EU4DigitalSME's goals and scope, the ability to achieve the highest impact possible, as well as the existence of significant ethical concerns, or a potential conflict of interest. All concerns will be check for validity on an individual basis, and if determined positive, will be reflected in the final ranking list of proposal.

14. Conflict of Interest

EU4DigitalSME is aware that a **conflict of interest** may occur as a result of economic interests, political or national affinities, family of emotional relationships, or any other common interest. If there is a conflict of interest in at least one of the above categories, the connection needs to be explained to the EU4DigitalSME project.

In the case of a group of applicants (consortium), they must declare that they will, without any delay, inform the Contracting Authority about any situation that might be considered as a conflict of interest or a situation that might lead to it. Also, the consortium must declare that:

- ✓ The lead applicant and partners are not **commercially** affiliated institutions/business entities, nor are they directly connected by ownership **for economic interests**.
- ✓ The Partners are not mutually **commercially** affiliated institutions/business entities, nor are they directly connected by ownership for **economic interest**.

In cases where Consortium is made of Organisations for Public benefit that are linked to each other on non-economic basis (linked by foundation, board membership, and similar), this is not an automatic elimination criterion, however, such linkage needs to be explained in dedicated sections of the Application form (Information on the Lead Applicant and Partners;

IV. Declaration of partners; V. Declaration by the Lead Applicant), and is to be evaluated by the project on case-by-case basis.

Finally, the lead applicant for the consortium confirms that he has signed a form of Partnership Agreement with other partners, in accordance with the instructions set out in this Guide for Applicants (see chapter 13 (a) Administrative and initial eligibility check).

Additionally, affiliated entities and employees of the EU4DigitalSME project are not permitted to take part in this Call for Proposal.

15. Communication Flow

Applicants will receive communications after the administrative and the quality check of the evaluation process indicating if they passed or not. A communication will be sent to applicants rejected at the latest two weeks after the evaluation process is completed.

16. Contracting

After the evaluation of the proposal is completed and selected DIH have been notified, selected consortia need to sign and submit a letter of intent as a legal basis for the cooperation, outlining their commitment to the project. Afterwards a commercial and legal eligibility check will be conducted, including a review of the supporting documents in order to prepare the contracts. The contracting phase ends with the signing of a MoU, as well as contracts between GIZ and the lead applications.

17. Complaints

Applicants are kindly requested to please take into consideration that the evaluations are run by qualified trained experts, and there is no interference in their assessment. Therefore, complaints related to the results of the evaluation will not be considered other than the possible mistakes in the evaluation of the first automatic eligibility criteria.

Applicants have three (3) working days to submit complaints starting from the day after the communication was sent. EU4DigitalSME will review the complaint within no more than seven calendar days from its receipt. If more time to assess the complaint is required, EU4DigitalSME will inform the applicant by email about the extension. EU4DigitalSME will not review anonymous complaints as well as complaints with incomplete information.

Nevertheless, if after receiving the results of one of the evaluation phases (when foreseen), the applicant considers that a breach has been committed, they may send us their complaint. To do so, please send us your complaint in English by email to EU4DigitalSME@giz.de, including the following information:

1. Contact details (including email address where to send the reply to),
2. The subject of the complaint,
3. Information and evidence regarding the alleged breach.

18. Questions and Answers

Any **additional question** can be handed in until February 23rd, 2022. If they were submitted in time, the questions will be answered until the deadline for the Call for Proposal on February 28th, 2022. Questions are to be submitted using the [Questions and Answers section on the](#)

[Call for Proposal website](#). Applicant's questions and their respective answers will be made public on a weekly basis to all interested parties via the same website.

In case of **technical issues or problems (e.g. with the submission form)**, please include the following information in your message:

- Username, telephone number and email where to address the reply to.
- Detailed explanation of the specific problem (error messages you encountered, bugs descriptions, etc.); and
- Screenshots of the problem.

Applicants will NOT be directly informed on updates regarding the call, and specific issues regarding their applications. Relevant updates will be uploaded to [News and Events section of the Call for Proposal website](#).

19. Final provisions

Any matters not covered by this Guide will be governed by BiH law. Applicants are kindly requested to please take into account that EU4DigitalSME makes its utmost effort to keep all provided data confidential; however, for the avoidance of doubt, applicants are solely responsible to indicate any confidential information as such. Any Intellectual Property Rights will remain the applicants' property.

Providing data is voluntary, although it is necessary to participate in the Open Call. Without providing your data, it is not possible to contact you and evaluate the application.

If you have any questions please reach us at: EU4DigitalSME@giz.de.

The EU4DigitalSME project might cancel the call at any time, change its provisions or extend it. In such a case, EU4DigitalSME will inform all applicants about such changes. The signature of the Agreement is an initial condition to establish obligations among any applicant and any Consortium partner, with respect to the confidentiality of the application.