



COSME Programme

Guide for Applicants

COSME calls for proposals 2020

Version 3.1
10 June 2020



History of changes

Version	Date	Change
1.0	27.11.2015	Initial version
1.1	22.09.2016	- Actualisation of hyperlinks; References to "Agency" replaced by references to "EASME" and references to "Description of Work" replaced by "Description of the Action"; - Simplification of the information on the H2020 participant portal (use of direct references to the Participant Portal); - Section II.2, affiliated entities can take part in the action only as "applicants"; - Section III.1, reference to the need of submitting CVs introduced; - Section III.2, harmonisation of the categories of the budget template with those of H2020; - Section III.2, references to what to do in case of consortia with more than 20 partners introduced; - Section V, reference to the use of external sources during evaluation removed; - Section V.1, detailed information on the review procedure introduced; - Section VI, reference to the Reserve list expiring after six months removed.
2.0	08.09.2017	- References to the year of the Guide for Applicants removed; - Section II.1 updated and reference to the use of functional mailboxes introduced; - Section II.2, simplification of the roles of consortium coordinator and consortium partners, references to "affiliated entities" replaced by "linked third parties" and update of the role of those "linked third parties", reference to the Model Grant Agreement as basis for establishing the internal organisation of consortia introduced; - Section II.3, references to "organisations" and "applicants" replaced by "entities"; - Section III, updated information on the submission tool and procedure, warning on proposals submitted to the wrong topic/strand to be declared ineligible introduced; - Section III.1, references to "externalities" replaced by "critical risks", reference to the mandatory use of a Work Package "project management" included, warning on the consistency of the work plan introduced; - Section III.2, "should" is replaced by "must" to make the budget requirements mandatory; - Section III.2.3, reference to lump-sum based budgets introduced; - Section V, references to the use of independent experts in the evaluation phase introduced; - Reference to "evident material errors" replaced by "obvious clerical errors".
3.0	1.06.2018	References to the year of the Guide for Applicants removed; references to SGAs added.
3.1	10.06.2020	- Change in the year of the guidance - Replacement of broken links - Changes in the structure of Part A forms

CONTENTS

I. Introduction	4
II. Preparation of the proposal.....	4
II.1 Relevant documents.....	4
II.2 Participants (mono- and multi-beneficiary agreements).....	4
II.3 Registration and validation of participants	5
III. Proposal Submission	5
III.1 Description of the Action (DoA) - Technical Annex 1.....	7
<i>Section A: Project summary</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Section B: Action: objectives, management structures and work plan.....</i>	<i>7</i>
III.2 Budget	8
<i>III.2.1 Budget Overview</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>III.2.2 Detailed budget (Technical Annex 2)</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>III.2.3 Special requirements for the Lump Sums</i>	<i>9</i>
IV. General rules on the budget of the action (not applicable in case of lump sum).....	9
V. Evaluation of Proposals.....	10
V.1 Administrative review procedures.....	11
<i>Admissibility and Eligibility Review procedure.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Evaluation review procedure</i>	<i>11</i>
VI. Grant Agreement Preparation (GAP) and Award	12
Annex - Checklist	13

I. Introduction

The Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME) manages EU programmes and initiatives on behalf of the European Commission. It implements part of the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (COSME) programme, in particular calls for proposals included in the yearly work programme.

This Guide for Applicants contains information aimed at guiding potential beneficiaries through the mechanics of preparing and submitting a proposal. It provides guidance on how to complete and submit a proposal from the content point of view, and to prepare the estimated budget.

This Guide is based on the rules and conditions of the COSME programme,¹ the COSME annual work programmes² and the derived calls for proposals. **The Guide does not** in itself have legal value and does **not supersede these documents**.

II. Preparation of the proposal

II.1 Relevant documents

COSME calls are published in the [EASME website](#). With the exception of ad-hoc grants, COSME calls are also published in the [Participant Portal](#) of the Horizon2020 research and innovation framework programme. Consultations for Specific Agreements (SGA) under Framework Partnership Agreements (FPA) are sent directly to the respective consortium leaders.

The main documents relevant to any COSME call are the following:

- Call for proposals
- Guide for applicants
- Technical Annex 1: Description of the action
- Technical Annex 2: Template for detailed budget
- Model grant agreement (mono- or multi- beneficiary)

All these documents shall be available in the call-dedicated part of the EASME website. A functional mailbox specific for the call shall be also indicated in the same webpage. Communications about the call text/conditions are to be done exclusively by using this mailbox. A link to the questions and answers (so called "FAQ") relating to the content of the call is also updated regularly in the same page of the EASME website.

II.2 Participants (mono- and multi-beneficiary agreements)

The call text sets out the provisions in terms of the number of potential beneficiaries of the grant covered by the call. Two types of grants may be distinguished with regards to the number of beneficiaries:

¹ Regulation (EU) No 1287/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing a Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (COSME) (2014 - 2020) and repealing Decision No 1639/2006/EC

² https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme/programming-monitoring-evaluation_en

- Mono-beneficiary grants: The grant agreement is signed between the EASME and one beneficiary which is entirely responsible for the implementation of the action.
- Multi-beneficiary grants: The grant agreement is signed between the EASME and a consortium of beneficiaries led by a coordinator. The consortium is responsible for the implementation of the action.

Therefore – with the multi-beneficiary grant, two types of beneficiaries may be found: “consortium coordinator” and “consortium partners”. Each consortium partner will be considered as co-beneficiary if the proposal is awarded a grant. If applicable to the grant, linked third parties,³ may take part in the action as applicants.

In case of multi-beneficiary grant, specific provisions for internal organisation are set in the grant agreement (see in particular, chapter 5). **It is essential that all partners have a sound and comprehensive knowledge of the model grant agreement** already at the stage of the preparation of the proposal.

The coordinator will act as the intermediary for all communication between the beneficiaries and the EASME.

II.3 Registration and validation of participants

Before being able to apply to any COSME call for proposals, **all beneficiaries (coordinator and partners) have to be registered in the [Funding and Tenders Portal](#).**

COSME shares with the Horizon 2020 programme (H2020) a common procedure for the registration of potential applicants based on the assignation of a unique Participant Identification Code (PIC) to each entity.

The PIC is a unique 9 digit number that makes it possible for the Commission to identify a participant. It is used in all grant-related interactions between the participant and the Commission.

Any entity that has participated in proposals under the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Development, the Horizon 2020 programme or in calls launched by DG Enterprise/DG GROW since 2012 or by EASME is likely to have already received a valid PIC.

If a PIC is not yet available for an entity, applicants shall register their organisation in the [Participant Register](#).

Once the responsible service has validated the documents submitted by the entity the temporary PIC becomes final. However, it should be stressed that any entity in possession of a temporary PIC is allowed to submit proposals in response to COSME. The final PIC may be obtained at a later stage.

Make it sure to read all the information on the registration and validation procedure in the [H2020 Online Manual](#).

III. Proposal Submission

Proposals must be submitted electronically, using the Submission and Evaluation of Proposals programme (SEP). A link to the submission tool is made available in the call-dedicated part of the Participant Portal under the heading “Submission Service”.

³ Legal entities having a legal or capital link with applicants

Proposals arriving at the EASME by any other means are regarded as not submitted, and will not be evaluated.

Where a proposal is submitted by several applicants, a lead applicant (the coordinator) must be designated and will have to submit the application on behalf of the consortium.

The **electronic submission set** comprises two parts:

- **Administrative Forms** - to be completed on line in SEP

- **Part B and Annexes** - to be uploaded (in pdf format)

The **Administrative Forms** contain the proposals' general information (title, abstract, , declarations on exclusion and), the participants data (e.g. organisation's name, legal status, contact information), and the budget overview. This information will be encoded in a structured database for the preparation of the grant agreement and then further processing to produce, for example, statistics or evaluation reports. This information will also support the EASME staff during the evaluation process.

Part B and Annexes contains the substantive part of the proposal. The set of documents included in this section is specific to each call but it will contain at least the **Description of the Action (Technical Annex 1)** and the **detailed budget (Technical Annex 2)**⁴. This information will be used for the evaluation, for the preparation of the grant agreement and then for monitoring the implementation of the action.

Editable templates of the documents contained in Part B can be downloaded from the submission service. Once the documents have been duly completed by the consortium partners, the coordinator is requested to upload the final proposal to the submission platform. The final documents must be converted (not scanned) into pdf format.

Only the documents indicated in the submission platform should be uploaded. Unless specified in the call, any hyperlinks to other documents, embedded material, and any other documents (company brochures, supporting documentation, reports, audio, video, multimedia, etc.) sent electronically or by post will be disregarded.

A maximum length may be specified for the different sections of Part B, or for Part B as a whole. Applicants must keep their proposals within these limits. Where no page limits are given, or where limits are only recommended, it is in the interest of applicants to keep the text concise to ease the reading of evaluators.

The proposal may be submitted in any of the official languages of the European Union. If the submitted proposal is not in English, a translation of the full proposal will be welcome as it will ease the work of the evaluators. In any case, an abstract of the proposal in English shall be included in Part B of the proposal.

Proposals must be submitted before the deadline specified in the Call for proposals. It is the responsibility of applicants to ensure the timely submission of the proposal. SEP will be automatically closed at the call deadline.

Errors discovered in proposals submitted to SEP can be rectified by simply submitting a corrected version. For as long as the call is open, the new submission will overwrite the previous one. **The last version of the proposal received before the deadline is the one which will be evaluated.** The EASME will not accept further additions, corrections or re-submissions, once the deadline has passed,

Proposals should be registered with the correct call. If registered with another call by mistake, the proposal will be regarded as not submitted. Some calls might be published with different topics, lots or strands. In this case, it is important to submit the proposal for the correct lot or strand, otherwise it will be declared ineligible for not corresponding wholly or in part, to the topic description against which it is

⁴ Except for the case of grants awarded with lump sums (see point III.2.3 - Special requirements for the Lump Sums)

submitted. Applicants may withdraw a proposal before the deadline by clicking the withdraw proposal button.

Further information on the submission procedure can be found in the [H2020 Proposal Submission Service User Manual](#).

III.1 Description of the Action (DoA) - Technical Annex 1

The description of the action should be provided using a standard template which can be downloaded in the dedicated part of the submission platform (Technical Annex 1). The structure of the DoA is the following:

Section A: Project summary

In this section applicants have to provide basic information on the organisations taking part in the action and the work packages in which the action is structured. The deliverables associated to the implementation of the action and a list of milestones functioning as “control points” have also to be presented.

Finally, applicants are expected to list the critical risks which may hamper the implementation of the project and the mitigation measures foreseen to address them.

Section B: Action: objectives, management structures and work plan

Section B.1: Objectives of the Action

In this section, applicants are requested to describe the specific objectives of the project, which shall be consistent with the objectives of the call for proposals. The specific objectives should be clear, realistic and measurable through a set of performance indicators.

Applicants shall also describe what the target audience(s) of the action is/are, and which tools and methodologies will be used by the beneficiaries to reach them.

Applicants shall propose a set of performance indicators coherent with the call requirements to measure the impact and success of the action. Those indicators must be quantifiable. Applicants shall define a “target” for each performance indicator which should be achieved by the end of the action’s implementation.

Section B.2: Management structure and procedures

In section B.2, applicants shall first explain how the profile of the proposed participant(s) is aligned with the objectives of the call for proposals. Moreover, the managerial capacities of the consortium shall be demonstrated. Elements such as the consortium organisational structure and the decision-making process shall be described in detail.

Applicants shall also demonstrate that the skills and expertise of the staff implementing the action enable them to fulfil the role they have been assigned to. A brief summary of the CVs of each partner's key staff shall be provided in table B.2.2. Full CV's shall not be included in the proposal, unless explicitly requested (in such a case, they have to be sent as an additional annex to the DoA).

Section B3: Work plan

As a general rule, COSME calls are structured into pre-defined Work Packages (WP), one of which is devoted to the management of the project. A WP is a building block of the work breakdown structure that allows the project management to define the steps necessary for completion of the action.

For each WP, applicants are requested to describe:

- The specific objectives which shall be achieved by the completion of the WP.
- The specific tasks and activities which shall be implemented by the participants.
- The list of beneficiaries (coordinator and partners) implementing the WP (including their role and main tasks).
- The necessity of subcontracting any of the tasks (including an explanation on how the selection of the subcontractor shall be performed).
- The indicators used to measure the performance of the beneficiaries in that WP.
- The human resources allocated to the implementation of the WP (person-months).

It is essential that the WP covers the all set of activities to be implemented in a logical and coherent way, and that they are all consistent with the requirements of the call for proposals.

The template could differ for consultations for specific agreements (SGA).

III.2 Budget

III.2.1 Budget Overview

The Administrative Forms in the submission platform contain the Budget Overview which must be filled in online by the applicants.

The Budget Overview breaks down the estimated budget of the proposal per participant according to the following categories:

- (A) Direct personnel costs;
- (B) Direct costs of subcontracting;
- (C) Other direct costs;
- (D) Direct costs of providing financial support (only applicable if explicitly accepted as eligible costs in the call for proposals)
- (E) Indirect costs (calculated automatically as 7% of A+B+C);
- (F) Total estimated eligible costs (calculated automatically as A+B+C+D+E)
- (G) Reimbursement rate (defined in the call for proposals)
- (H) Maximum EU contribution (calculated automatically as F*G)

(I) Requested grant⁵

If applicable, the template could differ slightly from the above in view of aligning it to the budget structure of the corporate e-grant management tools where the grants are prepared and signed.

III.2.2 Detailed budget (Technical Annex 2)

The estimated budget of the project must be further detailed using the standard template which can be downloaded in Part B of the submission platform (Technical Annex 2).

This section addresses the steps applicants need to follow when filling in Technical Annex 2.

The detailed budget form supports consortia of up to 20 partners. Should your consortium involves more than 20 organisations, please contact the functional mailbox mentioned in section 14 of the call for proposals.

Proposal Cover Sheet

Applicants shall fill in the project's name (full title) and its acronym. Standard Latin alphabet and numbers, spaces or underscore shall be used. Any other special characters or symbols shall be avoided.

Tables 1 and 2 Expenditures and Revenues

Table 1 breaks down the estimated expenditure of the project per participant and type of cost. Most of the information in this table is taken automatically from the data of the participants through protected links. **Applicants shall only input in this table the Requested grant per Consortium partner.**

Table 2 summarises the estimated revenues of the project. All amounts in these forms should be given to the nearest whole Euro (no decimals!).

Applicants shall ensure that **the total estimated eligible costs are equal to the total revenue** of the project.

Applicants shall also ensure that the information in these two tables is entirely consistent with the information contained in the budget overview (see section III of this Guide).

Participants Budget

These worksheets gather all financial data of an individual participant. They need to be filled in for each participant (including the co-ordinator). All amounts in these forms should be given to the nearest whole Euro (no decimals!).

III.2.3 Special requirements for the Lump Sums

When a grant is awarded with a lump sum, there will not be any Budget overview nor Detailed budget (annex 2) to be filled.

IV. General rules on the budget of the action (not applicable in case of lump sum)

The budget must cover all eligible costs of the project.

The description of all items must be sufficiently detailed and all items broken down into their main components. The number of units and unit rate must be specified for each component on the basis of the indications provided in the call and the application set.

⁵ The Requested grant shall be equal or lower than the Maximum EU contribution.

The forward budget must:

- show all the costs and revenue that the applicants considers necessary to carry out the project.
- give an indication on the different types of human resources and their related costs (technical, administrative, etc.);
- be sufficiently detailed to allow identification, monitoring and control of the operation(s) proposed;
- be in balance, i.e. total revenue and total expenditure must be equal.

The EASME reserves the right not to consider unexplained costs items in the amount granted.

Amounts must be in Euro with no decimals.

Applicants of countries where the Euro is not the national currency are asked to use the official EU exchange rates that can be found on the [Europa](#) website:

During the execution of the grant agreement, costs which have been incurred in other currencies than the Euro shall be converted according to the provisions of the grant agreement.

Provisions on the eligibility of the costs are provided in the call and in the model grant agreement. It is absolutely essential to have a clear understanding of the rules.

V. Evaluation of Proposals

The brief electronic message given by the SEP system after each submission is simply an acknowledgement of receipt. This message does not imply that a proposal has been considered admissible or accepted as eligible for evaluation.

All applications will be examined by an Evaluation Committee, which might be assisted by independent experts. The information will be assessed in light of the eligibility, selection and award criteria set out in the call for proposals.

The assessment of each proposal will be based exclusively on the information provided by the applicants in the proposal submitted. It is therefore essential that the application is comprehensive of all requested documents.

The Evaluation Committee may ask an applicant to provide additional information or to clarify the supporting document submitted in connection with the application in the case of obvious clerical errors.

At the end of the evaluation, applicants will be informed in writing that their proposals have been:

- Proposed for award, based on the score obtained after evaluation, and indicating the proposed amount to be awarded. This communication should not be regarded under any circumstances as a formal commitment by the EASME to provide financial support, as this depends on the satisfactory and timely conclusion of the award phase, or
- Inserted in the reserve list. The EASME may decide to draw a reserve list composed of proposals which have obtained a score above the thresholds mentioned in the evaluation criteria, or
- Rejected. The reasons for rejection will be communicated.

V.1 Administrative review procedures

The rejection letter will indicate the means for submission of the request for review. Any unsuccessful applicant may request a review within 30 days from the date of the rejection letter/ communication to the applicants of the evaluation results signed by the EASME. In case of proposals submitted on behalf of a consortium of applicants, the request must be raised by the coordinator. A holding reply with acknowledgment of the request will be sent to the applicant within two weeks of the date of reception of the request for review.

A review can be asked in two cases:

- 1) when the application has been rejected as inadmissible (not admitted to the evaluation phase)
- 2) when the application has been deemed as unsuccessful after the evaluation phase

Admissibility and Eligibility Review procedure

When the application has been rejected as inadmissible, the scope of the review will be limited to assess the fulfilment of either admissibility or eligibility criteria as laid down in the call for proposals.

An Admissibility and Eligibility Review Committee will be convened to examine each case. The Committee provides specialist opinions in the form of a report with recommendations on line of action for each request. In the light of its review, the Committee will recommend a course of action to the responsible Authorising Officer.

Three recommendations are foreseen: (i) that the complaint is not eligible for admissibility/eligibility review; (ii) that the complaint is rejected as unfounded; (iii) that the complaint is founded, which may lead to the evaluation of the proposals/the participation in the action.

The decision will be taken by the Authorising Officer and communicated to the applicant within 3 months from the closing date for submitting complaints.

Evaluation review procedure

When the application has been deemed as unsuccessful after the evaluation phase, the scope of the review will be limited to procedural aspects of the evaluation which includes procedural errors, factual errors, and manifest errors of assessment of the evaluation.

A Review Committee will be convened to examine each case. It is out of the scope of the Committee to review the merits of the proposal. The role of the Committee is indeed not to call into question the judgement of appropriately qualified experts: therefore it does not cover the experts' assessment against the evaluation criteria.

The Committee provides specialist opinions on the implementation of the evaluation process on the basis of all the available information related to the proposal and its evaluation in the form of a report with recommendations on line of action for each request. In the light of its review, the Committee will recommend a course of action to the responsible Authorising Officer. Three recommendations are foreseen: (i) that the complaint is rejected as unfounded; (ii) that the complaint is upheld but the problem concerned did not jeopardise the decision whether or not to fund the proposal; (iii) that the complaint is upheld and a re-evaluation is recommended.

The decision will be taken by the Authorising Officer.

The Committee shall inform the applicant about the result of the evaluation review at the latest two months after the meeting of the Committee.

VI. Grant Agreement Preparation (GAP) and Award

The Award phase spans from the communication of the evaluation outcomes to the applicants to the signature of the grant agreement and include the so called GAP.

During the GAP, substantial changes to the original proposal are not allowed. However, the EASME may decide to request successful applicants to make certain limited adaptations to their proposal (e.g. corrections to ensure conformity with applicable financial and legal rules; corrections of clerical errors or clear inconsistencies). As a result, a proposal might be rejected if the applicant refuses to ensure a positive follow-up to the request or if the revised proposal results in a substantial change to the original one.

In the event that the original budget of the action is increased or that any selected proposal fail to conclude the grant agreement, the EASME may decide to award a grant to proposals from the reserve list, according to their ranking. In such a case, the concerned applicants will be informed and the GAP will be launched.

Once the call budget has been used up, the EASME will reject all remaining proposals on the reserve list and inform the applicants about it (by a "proposal rejection letter" sent to the coordinator).

When the GAP is successfully concluded, all parties will sign the Grant Agreement via the IT tool.

Annex - Checklist

Please use the following questionnaire to help you present a complete proposal.

Be as precise as possible. Incomplete proposals run the risk of being ineligible.

This checklist and the questions below will help you submitting a complete proposal. It is not to be uploaded in SEP, nor to be submitted otherwise.

TIME TABLE			
	Yes/No		Answer
My proposal respects the scheduled start date :		Start date of proposal:	
My proposal respects the maximum duration of the action		Duration of the action:	
FINANCING			
My budgetary proposal respects the maximum EU co-financing rate in %		My proposed EU co-financing rate in% is:	
My budgetary proposal respects the maximum EU co-financing ceiling in €		My proposed EU co-financing in € is:	
I have duly filled in the budgetary form (Technical Annex 2) providing the sources of co-financing		My co-financing amounts to – in €:	
I have duly filled in the budgetary form (Technical Annex 2) for all Consortium partners		My costs amount to – in €:	
I have duly filled in the budgetary form Technical Annex 2 for staff costs		My costs relating to staff amount to – in €:	
I have duly filled in the budgetary form (Technical Annex 2) for subcontracting costs		My costs relating to subcontracting amount to – in €:	
ADMISIBILITY AND ELIGIBILITY			
My proposal respects requirements in terms of number of applicants			
My proposal respects geographical conditions for eligibility		Partners of my proposal are legally established in the following countries:	
My proposal respects the legal status criteria for applicants		My proposal involves the following co-applicants:	
Neither I nor my co-applicants are in any of the exclusion situations (art. 106/107 FR)			
My proposal corresponds to the definition of the target organisation (in accordance with the call for proposals)		My organisation is/my partner organisations are: (explain how they correspond to the target organisation)	

My proposal is strictly non-profit-making			
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SELECTION			
I, (and partners) have the required economic and financial capacity			
I (and partners) have the required operational capacity			

Of importance for the consortium in general, but in particular for the coordinator:

Preparing your proposal

Does your planned work fit with the call for proposals? Check that your proposed work does indeed address the topics open in this call.

Is your proposal complete? Proposals must comprise a Part A, containing the administrative information including participant and project cost details on standard forms; and a Part B. A proposal that does not contain both parts will be considered ineligible and will not be evaluated.

Does your proposal follow the required structure? Proposals should be precise and concise, and must follow exactly the proposal structure described in this document, which is designed to correspond to the evaluation criteria which will be applied. This structure varies for different call for proposals. Omitting requested information will almost certainly lead to lower scores and possible rejection.

Have you maximised your chances? There will be strong competition. Therefore, edit your proposal tightly, strengthen or eliminate weak points. Put yourself in the place of an expert evaluator; refer to the evaluation criteria indicated in the call text. Arrange for your draft to be evaluated by experienced colleagues; use their advice to improve it before submission.

Final checks before submission

- Do you have the agreement of all the members of the consortium to submit this proposal on their behalf?
- Check once more the eligibility criteria mentioned in the call for proposals! This includes any budget limits. Remember – the information given in part A is considered definitive.
- Is your Part B in portable document format (PDF)?
- Is the filename made up of the letters A to Z, and numbers 0 to 9? You should avoid special characters and spaces.
- Double check that you respect the font size and the page limitations for the different chapters!
- Have you virus-checked your computer? The SEP will automatically block the submission of any file containing a virus.
- Have you made yourself familiar with the SEP in good time?
- Have you allowed time to submit a first version of your proposal well in advance of the deadline (at least several days before), and then to continue to improve it with regular resubmissions?
- Have you completed the submission process for your latest version?

Following submission

Information submitted to the SEP remains encrypted until the deadline and can only be viewed by the applicant.

It is strongly recommended that you check that all your material has been successfully uploaded and submitted; that you have submitted the correct Part B files and that they are readable and printable.

You can revise and resubmit your proposal at any time up to the call deadline.