

# WOMEN TechEU

## Guidelines for applicants: Open Call #1

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OPENING: 18 March 2024

CLOSING: 20 May 2024 at 17:00 CEST (Brussels time)

\* The deadline for submission is as stated in this Guidelines document. Please note that the platform for submission's time depends on the user's configured timezone and may or may not coincide with the correct time (this depends on the user, not the platform for submission). Any discrepancies in system time will not be grounds for deadline extension.

Project Website: [www.womentecheurope.eu](http://www.womentecheurope.eu)

Open Call platform: [application link](#) ([bit.ly/3UYYPEm](https://bit.ly/3UYYPEm))

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**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

EEA	External Evaluator Average
ESR	Evaluation Summary Report
FIF	Financial Identification Form
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
OAS	Overall Average Score
OC	Open Call
PIC	Participant Identification Code
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
VAT	Value Added Tax

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. About Women TechEU project

The Women TechEU project is on a mission to ignite the potential of women-led early-stage start-ups in deep tech. 160 talented women entrepreneurs from across the European Union and Horizon Europe associated countries will be receiving direct support. With 75k€ grant (non-diluting finance) and a personalized business development programme, the project will be paving the way for these innovators to shine as leaders in deep tech innovation across Europe.

This project is a continuation of the Women TechEU scheme that was managed before by the EISMEA (European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency) during 2021 and 2022, and it has now become a fully-fledged cascade funding project that is run by an EU-wide consortium made up of different innovation ecosystem players, representatives of women entrepreneurs and also investors.

During 2 years the project will give out a total of 12 M€ in grants over 4 different competitive calls. Each cohort of successful entrepreneurs will then be also invited to use the menu of business development services that will be provided over a period of 6 months. Constant contacts and checkups of the KPIs that will be jointly developed by the entrepreneurs and their coaches will ensure that there is a smooth ongoing scaleup of their businesses, in order to prepare the winners to eventually also apply for the EIC Accelerator scheme.

### 1.2. Objectives and ambition

The main objective of the project is:

**To create a targeted programme of support for women founders and entrepreneurs leading deep tech start-ups from Europe to grow into tomorrow's tech leaders and to put women at the forefront of deep tech in Europe.**

Our ambition is to directly contribute to interconnected, inclusive, and more efficient innovation ecosystems that draw on the existing strengths of European ecosystems to engage new, less well-represented stakeholders and less advanced innovation territories. Women TechEU will leverage its experience and the strengths of existing start-up accelerators, Universities and other multiplier organisations around Europe to foster greater long-term inclusivity of women in deep tech.

Women TechEU will furthermore implement selection criteria for participants that prioritise **green, digital and social transitions** in line with European objectives, and will support accepted applicants in defining a social innovation strategy. The project will also **target less advanced innovation territories** (widening areas) to reduce territorial inequalities in access to innovation support.

The funding provided alongside our support services and the facilitation of investor meetings, particularly for start-ups from less- connected ecosystems, will enhance cross-border network connectivity and inter-regional collaboration of regional innovation valleys by reinforcing their capacity to create, reshore, and renew European value chains towards the green and digital transition. This approach will further strengthen and expand cooperation between innovation ecosystems worldwide.

In order to engage with these promising women-led deep tech early-stage start-ups Women TechEU will open competitive calls to select and empower them. These guidelines relate to the first open call: Women TechEU\_OC#1.

## 2. Calendar of the Open Call

### 2.1. Applications

Opening: 18/03/2024

Deadline for submission: 20/05/2024, 17:00h CEST\*, Brussels time

*\* The deadline for submission is as stated in this Guidelines document. Please note that the platform for submission's time depends on the user's configured*

timezone and may or may not coincide with the correct time (this depends on the user, not the platform for submission). Any discrepancies in system time will not be grounds for deadline extension.

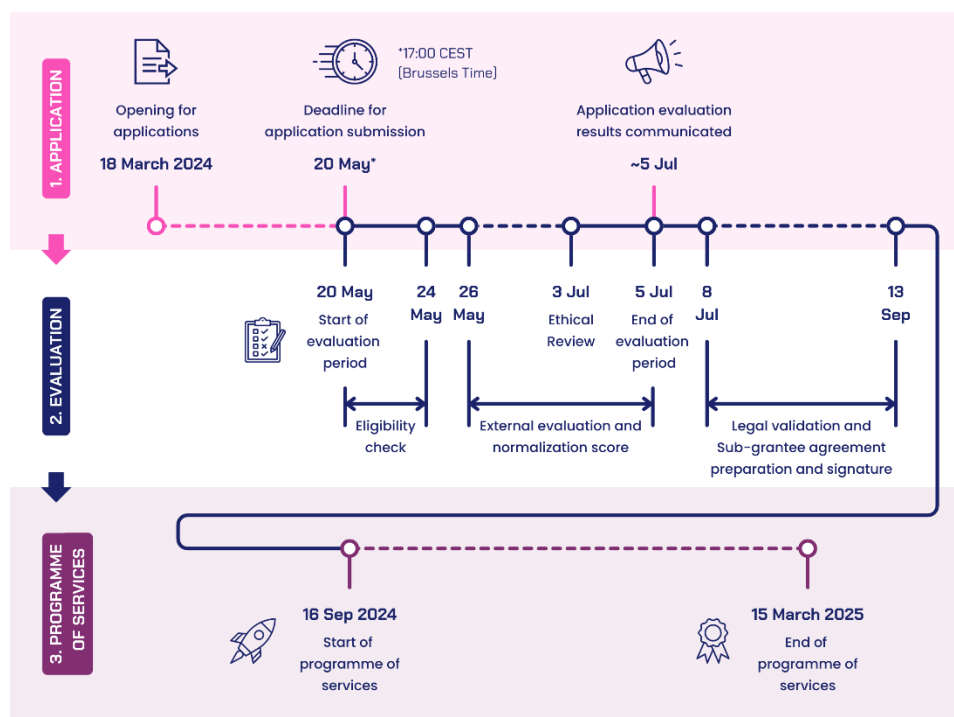


Figure 1: Calendar scheme of Open Call #1

## 2.2. Evaluation

- **Evaluation period:** Indicatively period to evaluate applicants. **20/05/2024 to 05/07/2024**
  - **Eligibility check:** 20/05/2024 – 24/05/2024
  - **External evaluation and normalization score:** 26/05/2024 – 05/07/2024
  - **Ethical review:** 03/07/2024



- **Results:** The communication of the evaluation's final results to all the applicants will be around **05/07/2024**. There will not be any prior disclosure of information about the evaluation process before that date.

The selected applicants will go through the legal validation and the sub-grantee agreement preparation afterwards.

- **Legal validation and Sub-grantee agreement preparation and signature:** Starting from 08/07/2024 until 13/09/2024. Legal validation is applied exclusively to successful applicants and involves the submission of various documents (see Section 5.e) to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Women TechEU project.
- **Starting of the programme of services:** Successful applicants will start the service programme as of **16/09/2024**.

### 2.3. Programme of services

- **Onboarding:** 16/09/2024
- **Until:** 15/03/2025

This unique Women TechEU Programme offers:

- **Service 1 Women mentors (one meeting per month during 6 months):**  
As part of the programme, we will offer women entrepreneurs access to carefully selected, and experienced women mentors who will provide guidance, support, and valuable insights tailored to each founder and designed to help them succeed in their business ventures. Through the Sploro platform, we will enable specific matchmaking of and connections and mentorship sessions between women, fostering a supportive network that can help overcome the unique challenges women entrepreneurs often face. Research has shown that positive influence from successful women can play a crucial role in the success of other women-led businesses.

- **Service 2 Investor outreach and pitch preparation:** We will open doors and make introductions to investor entities (business angels, VCs, funds) in our networks who are positively welcoming women entrepreneurs. Our experts will provide pitch presentation review and rehearsal support providing guidance and feedback to improve confidence in delivery. This will help the start-ups overcome the challenge of raising early investment that women founders often face.
  - **Service 3 Investor and Export Readiness Check:** Using a structured approach with questions on the core business areas, the start-ups will be assessed on team, product, market, finance, operations and IP in order to determine if they are ready to pitch in front of investors, or present to potential clients. Women entrepreneurs tend to doubt themselves a million times more than male counterparts so practising with one of our experts will build confidence, and if there are areas that need attention, they will be helped to address those before pitching. Connections with EIT Food programme in internationalization RocketUp will be sought, when possible.
  - **Service 4 – Soft Skills Training:** Since the Women TechEU start-ups are at the beginning of their entrepreneurial journey, the women entrepreneurs will be offered development content on soft skills areas like public speaking, presentation, leadership skills, improve productivity by using AI, and more. Given that they come from the deep tech sector, their hard skills will be top-notch, but we want to train them to become an all-rounder with our blended courses (mix of in-person and recorded sessions).
  - **Service 5 – Sales Strategy & Execution:** The go-to-market strategy is the area where most companies fail. We see this in front of investors as well as in pitches to competition or awards juries. Here at Women TechEU we expect the companies to be even more embryonic in their understanding of how to find leads, how to fill their pipeline, when and what to say upon follow up and even how to tune the pricing models to the right target group of clients. Women entrepreneurs tend to be less aggressive in their sales strategy and we want to
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instil in them the knowledge and confidence that it is ok to ask for money for services and products.

- **Service 6 - Environmental Impact Assessment:** The environmental impact of technology and business models from entrepreneurs is a growing area of interest to investors. Women TechEU will offer the service of climate impact projections to support women entrepreneurs to understand the environmental impact of their innovations and help them design sustainable and impactful business models from the outset. The service leverages an online tool designed for start-ups, based on the benchmark Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) method. Users can explore new options to make a positive climate impact reducing CO<sub>2</sub>eq emissions of their business model and deep tech innovation. It can also measure health, ecotoxicity, and resource depletion like rare earth minerals.
- **Service 7 - Corporate Access:** Leveraging the large network of corporates provided by EIT KICs, this service provides a platform for women-led start-ups to connect with potential partners and customers. As women are underrepresented in the corporate world, this service offers a great opportunity for women-led start-ups in Europe to expand their reach, showcase their innovative solutions, and secure valuable partnerships that can help them achieve their business goals.

At the moment of submission, the applicant will select her top three services that she would like to get from Women TechEU project. During the execution of the Programme of Services selected services from the EIC Business Accelerator Service will also be offered.

### 3. Proposal submission process

#### 3.1. Overall process

The submission will be done through the official online submission platform, Sploro's platform. A direct link can be found in the Women TechEU website and [application link](#).

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Only applications received directly through the online submission platform will be considered eligible.

Applicants will be provided with an editable template of the application form ([see Annex I](#)) to let them prepare the application offline before introducing the information in the form available at the Sploro platform. **Sending this form template in any other format, via e-mail or any other means will automatically disqualify the submission.**

If the applicant discovers an error in a submitted application or aims to improve the application, the applicant may submit a new version provided the call deadline has not passed. In order to facilitate this step, the applicant must get in touch with the managers of the open call (Sploro) at [helpdesk@womentecheuropa.eu](mailto:helpdesk@womentecheuropa.eu) requesting to reopen the application. Applicants will be able to modify all answers of the application form as many times as needed until the deadline. Please be aware that once opened, the applicants should submit the completed form again before the set deadline or it will not be evaluated. Once resubmitted, only the last version received before the call deadline will be considered for evaluation. Failure to resubmit will result in the proposal not being evaluated.

Resubmission requests will be answered up to two hours before the deadline. The helpdesk cannot guarantee a timely response during the last two hours of the open call. Consider this when writing your proposals.

Women TechEU offers a dedicated **support channel** available for applicants at [helpdesk@womentecheuropa.eu](mailto:helpdesk@womentecheuropa.eu). Requests will receive a response within 2 working days. While all possible effort will be made to respond in a timely manner, the teams should plan their submission accordingly, allowing enough time before the deadline (i.e., at least 2 working days) if they expect an answer.

Please note that any email received outside the designated support channel will not be taken into account. It is imperative that all requests or inquiries related to the submission system or the call itself are directed through the official support channel. Requests or inquiries received AFTER two days before the closure time of the call will

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neither be considered nor answered. Lack of receipt of an answer to an inquiry shall not constitute grounds for an extension or re-evaluation of a proposal.

### 3.2. Documents to be submitted

The application process will be exclusively through the [Sploro platform](#). Before you begin, we recommend carefully reviewing [Annex 1](#), a preliminary version of the form, to familiarize yourself with key elements.

The application process is structured into sections designed to evaluate the **impact, excellence, and implementation**. External evaluators, experts in various related fields, will use these criteria to select the most promising proposals.

All required documents, such as the CV and the Investors Pitch Deck, must be uploaded in PDF format through the Sploro platform. The three-minute video is recommended to upload it into a file-sharing platform or website e.g. Google Drive, Dropbox, YouTube, etc in private mode and copy the link to the video into the application form.

**Application form:** the online form is divided in different sections:

1) **Legal and Contact Information:**

- Collects participant contact information: Full name, email, phone number, gender and position within the company.
  - Captures organization information: organization legal name, full address, logo of organization, VAT/Tax number and PIC number.
  - Performs an eligibility self-declaration: early-stage, start-up on deep tech, raised less than 1M€ in equity, not at Minimum Viable Product phase, founded or co-founded by women who hold a CEO, CTO or equivalent position. Women hold at least 25% of the shares, proposal is unique and not previously funded in the Women TechEU or other similar EU initiatives / projects.
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**2) Impact:**

- Details business overview, target market, and competitors.
- Describes the SWOT analysis and explains its contribution in economic, social and environmental terms.
- Defines whether the company contributes to the green, digital and social transition.

**3) Excellence:**

It is divided into company description and technology behind the start-up section.

- Addresses objectives in the Women TechEU call.
- Highlights technological innovation, advancements, and uniqueness.
- Describes technological and financial roadmap.
- Describes the activities to be funded under the Women TechEU grant.
- Identifies the deep tech technologies targeted: drop-down list of deep tech technologies the company is addressing.
- Assesses the solution's readiness level and ownership of intellectual property: Select the TRL of your current solution, does your company own any IP (drop-down list).

**4) Implementation:**

- Profiles key team members, emphasizing gender equity and diversity.
  - Explores team's deep tech industry experience and achievements.
  - Covers the woman founder's active participation and previous start-up experience.
-

**5) Ethics self-assessment:**

- Ethical considerations for biological material and data handling.
- Clinical and non-clinical research ethics.
- International and environmental ethical concerns.

**6) Declaration of Honour:**

- Certifies accuracy, completeness, and compliance.
- Commits to participation, stable funding, and necessary resources.
- Declares no administrative sanctions, exclusion situations, conflicts of interest or previous funding in the initiative.

Applicants must strictly adhere to the form provided by Women TechEU consortium via Sporo platform, which defines sections and the overall length. Evaluators will be instructed not to consider extra material in the evaluation.

### 3.3. Application preparation

For the successful submission, applicants are strongly advised to follow these steps:

1. Check the guidelines for applicants to determine if your organisation is eligible for the programme.
2. Applicants are required to apply online and answer all mandatory questions through [this link](#). Moreover, applicants must submit all the requested documents established in the call. The lack of any of the documents or answers to required questions will hinder the submission of the proposal.
3. In addition, note that certain documents - which will be required for each applicant selected for the programme and signing a sub-grantee agreement - may take time to acquire. It is highly advisable that you read the **Section 5.f:**

**Sub-grantee agreement preparation** and take into consideration the time needed to obtain these documents.

4. Be concrete and concise. Open questions have character limitations. Please examine all the open call documents and attend at least one of the online events promoted by the Women TechEU project to be prepared. Please, mark your calendars for the upcoming InfoDays:

- a. **1st InfoDay:** Tuesday 26/03/2024 at 11:00h CET (Brussels time)
- b. **2nd InfoDay:** Tuesday 07/05/2024 at 17:00h CEST (Brussels time)

5. Only submissions within the Open Call duration will be accepted. There will not be any deadline extensions unless there is a Force Majeure situation i.e., a major problem with the platform caused by the Women TechEU consortium and not by the applicants, making the system unavailable for a long period. It is strongly advised not to wait until the last moment to submit.

## 4. Rules and conditions

### 4.1. Eligible Beneficiaries

Women TechEU targets women-led early-stage deep tech start-ups. In this section, specific criteria and conditions are outlined, establishing eligibility for potential beneficiaries.

Here are the key definitions that guide the selection of beneficiaries:

1. **Established country:** the applicant must be established in a EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country\*.

\*List of Horizon Europe Associated Countries [as published by](#) the European Commission on the date of the deadline of the call.

2. **Early-stage start-up:**

- The legal entity should be established at least six months prior to the deadline of the call
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- The 'start-up' should be compliant with the definition of SME, according to the EU definition of SMEs according to the [EU recommendation 2003/361](#)
- Early-stage refers to the phase of start-up development generally preceding the rapid growth phase. As an indication, the following criteria will be considered, amongst other to define an early-stage start-up:
  - Start-ups that have been established and operating for not more than 8 years counting backwards from deadline of the call date and,
  - Start-ups that have raised limited funding (up to 1 M € in equity),
  - Before reaching a high fidelity Minimum Viable Product

3. **Women leadership:** Women legally recognized as founders or co-founder of the company. The founder or co-founder of the company must also currently hold a top management position (CEO, CTO or equivalent) within the same company. It will be also required that women hold at least 25% of the shares in the CAP table (capitalization table) of the company.

**Important Notes:**

Women TechEU supports women in all their diversity. The word “woman” equates to a cis woman, or a transgender woman who is legally defined as a woman.

The lead applicant of the submission must be a woman.

The means of verification will be the Identity Card issued by the country of their nationality.

4. **Deep tech:** Deep tech innovation aims to provide concrete solutions to our societal problems by finding its source in a deep interaction with the most recent scientific and technological advances and by seeking to produce a profound impact in the targeted application areas.

Sectors, which are most fertile for deep tech applications are life-science, computing, food and agri-tech, aerospace, energy and clean-tech, industrial technologies,

telecom, new materials, or chemistry. However deep tech also includes, among other, artificial intelligence, deep learning and machine learning.

Women TechEU welcomes applications from all deep tech fields of activity.

5. **Not previously funded for the same activities by another EU Programme:** To avoid double funding, neither the full application of any of its parts have benefited from any other EU Programme such as Women TechEU initiative, or similar initiatives (ie: Horizon Europe - [EmpoWomen](#))

6. **Not part of Women TechEU beneficiaries:** Women TechEU consortium partners, their affiliated entities, self-employees, and subcontractors are not allowed to submit a proposal and therefore to receive any financial support through the open calls.

Note that an Ethics Self-Assessment is already included in the application form. This step is crucial to ensure ethical compliance in the areas of research and development.

## 4.2. Submission platform

Only submissions done through the Sploro's platform will be eligible. Submissions received by any other means will not be eligible.

### a. Financial Support

#### **After Month 1**

During the first month of the programme, the selected applicants are required to draft a report outlining:

- The specific SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) they aim to achieve and
  - The services they select from a range provided by the consortium partners.
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These KPIs must adhere to the SMART criteria, as payments will be contingent upon their successful attainment. Submission of this report triggers the first payment of **€37,500**.

### **After Month 3**

At this moment a mid-term review takes place. Two elements will be evaluated:

- Assistance to the programme and
- The fulfilment of 40% of the previously defined KPIs.

A 40% completion of the KPIs will launch a payment of **€30,000** per selected applicant. A lower completion of the tasks will launch the proportional payment. If the KPIs are met by less than 20% the payment will be retained until the end of the programme. If less than 10% the selected applicant will be automatically disqualified from the process.

### **After the end of the programme**

At the end of the six months programme, a final review takes place. Provided that the selected applicants have completed the programme and have met 100% of the KPIs, they will receive the remaining financing (up to the €7,500). They will be paid according to their overall completion of the programme and their KPIs. Only in the case of an underperformance below of 20% achievement, the selected applicant's project will be terminated, and no further payment released.

**Note:** It is hereby stipulated that all disbursements to beneficiaries of the Women TechEU project shall be executed in a timeously manner, free from unreasonable delays, contingent upon the prior receipt by the project consortium of sufficient financing to guarantee a positive cash flow position.

### b. Origin of Funds

Once an applicant has been selected for funding, they will be required to sign a dedicated Sub-Grantee Funding Agreement with the Women TechEU consortium. It is important to note that the funds attached to the Sub-Grantee Funding Agreement come directly from the funds of the Horizon Europe Women TechEU project, which has been funded by the European Commission. Therefore, the funds remain the property of the EC until the payment of the balance, which is managed by the project partners in Women TechEU via European Commission Horizon Europe Grant Agreement Number 101133528.

The Sub-Grantee Funding Agreement represents a significant commitment from both the Women TechEU project and the sub-grantees who will receive funding. The relationship between sub-grantees and the European Commission through the Women TechEU project carries a set of obligations for the sub-grantees with the European Commission. These obligations will be outlined in the Sub-Grantee Agreement, which the selected applicants will need to review and agree to. It is the responsibility of the sub-grantees to ensure that they fulfil these obligations, and the Women TechEU consortium partners will provide guidance and support as needed.

All selected applicants should carefully review the terms of the agreement and ensure that they are able to meet their obligations in order to receive the funding and successfully carry out their project.

### c. Allocation of funds per project.

The financing provided for each sub-granted project is determined through a lump sum scheme, taking into account the requirements specified in the call text and the duration of the programme.

The total funding limit for a single organization across all Women TechEU calls is set at **€75,000**.

Women TechEU will have a total of four calls, where up to 160 start-ups will benefit. The goal is to select up to 40 start-ups for the OC#1. Therefore, for this initial call, the total available budget is €3,000,000. The number of start-ups chosen per call may vary. If there are not enough projects financed in the first call until the available budget is exhausted, the remaining budget will be allocated to the second open call.

#### d. Language

English is the official language for the Women TechEU open calls. Submissions done in any language other than English will not be eligible or evaluated. Legal incorporation documents submitted in national languages will need to be accompanied with an English translation.

English is the only official language during the whole implementation of the Women TechEU project. This means that any requested submission of documentation and deliverables will be done in English to be eligible, and the programme activities will be only held in English.

#### e. Documents format

Any documentation requested in any of the phases of the open call and programmes' implementation must be submitted electronically in PDF format without restrictions for printing.

#### f. Absence of conflict of interest

**Applicants must not have any actual or potential conflicts of interest during the Women TechEU selection process or the entire project duration.** Any situations that could potentially influence the impartiality of the individuals taking part in the selection process, or during the project implementation, are considered conflicts of

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interest. These can include financial interests, personal relationships, or any other factors that could affect the applicant's ability to remain impartial. All cases of conflict of interest will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the relevant Women TechEU selection committee and consortium partners. **If an applicant is found to have a conflict of interest, this could result in the application being disqualified.**

It is important to note that **Women TechEU consortium partners, their affiliated entities, employees, and subcontractors are not allowed to submit a proposal and therefore to receive any financial support through the open calls**, as this would violate the European Commission's regulations.

#### g. Ethical Issues

**Women TechEU strictly adheres to the fundamental ethical principles outlined in the "[European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#)".** To ensure compliance, all applicants are required to acknowledge and accept our privacy policy and declaration of honour during the submission process. This acknowledgment confirms that, by submitting the form, they accept the terms described in the provided text. No additional documents need to be uploaded; applicants are solely required to read and agree to the terms outlined when submitting the form.

During the submission process the ethics self-assessment questionnaire needs to be completed.

During the evaluation process, **the Women TechEU consortium may verify whether the self-assessment declaration aligns with the contents of the application.** In cases where clarification is needed, the consortium reserves the right to contact the applicant. If an applicant indicates that their application may have ethical issues, an ethics review will be conducted. Applications that fail to adequately address ethical concerns or privacy aspects will be rejected.

All applicants must thoroughly review and assess their applications for any potential ethical issues before submission. **Failure to comply with the ethical guidelines**

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**outlined in the "European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity" could lead to disqualification of the application.** Therefore, it is of utmost importance that all applicants take the necessary steps to ensure that their proposals meet the highest ethical standards.

#### h. Data Protection

**Women TechEU requires access to Personal and Entity Data in order to process and evaluate applications.** As open call coordinator, Sploro will act as the Data Controller for all data submitted through the Sploro platform for this purpose. To ensure the safety and security of this data, the Sploro platform has been designed and operates under strict compliance with The General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). Therefore, all applicants are required to accept the Sploro Platform terms to ensure full coverage. For more information regarding the data privacy policy and security measures implemented by Sploro, please refer to their website at <https://sploro.eu>.

Essential data may be shared with consortium partners and/or project associates, ensuring confidentiality and integrity, solely for the purpose of fulfilling the evaluation of the proposal and Programme's Services.

## 5. Proposal Evaluation and Selection Process

#### a. Application reception

Submissions will be done ONLY via the [Sploro platform](#), and it will be the unique entry point for all application submissions. Applications submitted by any other means will not be considered nor evaluated. Only the documentation included in the submission will be considered by evaluators.

The application reception will close on **20/05/2024, 17:00 CEST, Brussels time**. There will not be any deadline extensions unless there is a Force Majeure situation, caused

by the Women TechEU consortium and not by the applicants, which renders the system unavailable.

## b. Evaluation process

The evaluation process to be followed during the selection of the applicants is shown in the following figure. Before entering into the programme, a two-step evaluation will take place:

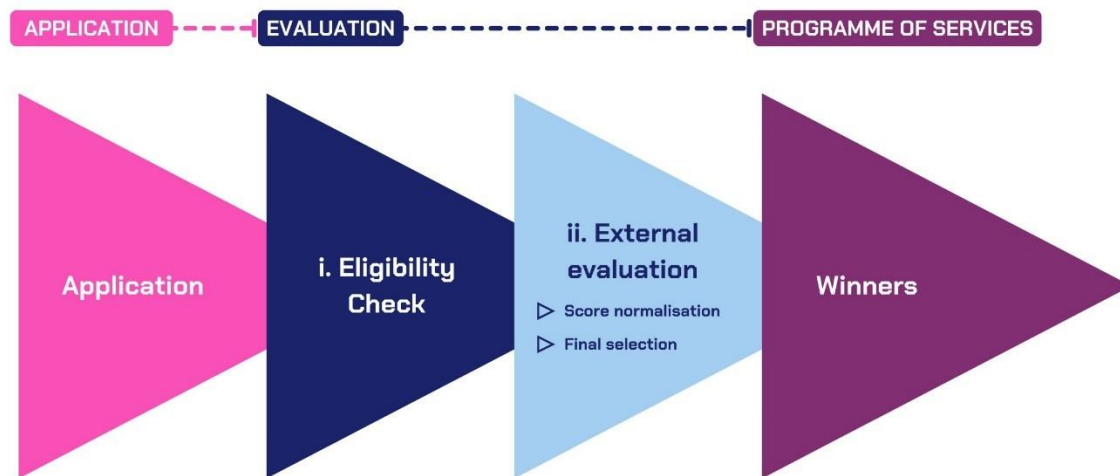


Figure 2: Evaluation process Open Call #1

The evaluation process will be evaluated according to the following categories:

### **Eligibility criteria**

An automatic filtering to discard non-eligible proposals will follow the shortlist below. Eligibility criteria check will verify:

- a) All the required fields in the online application form and all documents uploaded are correctly completed.
- b) The existence of a legal entity.



- c) Registration of the organisation at least six months before the deadline of the call
- d) Registration of the organisation within less than 8 years since the deadline of the call date.
- e) The organisation is legally registered in one of the eligible countries' list.
- f) Organisation classification as an early-stage SME:
  - i. A SME will be considered as such if complying with the [European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC16](#) and, the SME user guide. In a summary, the criteria which define an SME are:
    - o Independent (not linked or owned by another enterprise), by Recommendation 2003/361/EC.
    - o Headcount in Annual Work Unit (AWU) less than 250.
    - o Annual turnover less or equal to 50 million € OR annual balance sheet total less or equal to 43 million €.
  - ii. The organisation has not raised more than 1M € in equity.
  - iii. The organisation has not reached a high fidelity Minimum Viable Product.
- g) The organisation is a 'deep tech' company.
- h) The start-up is founded or co-founded by women holding a top management position (CEO, CTO or equivalent) in the company at the time of submission and women count with at least 25% of the shares in the company.
- i) The uniqueness of the proposal: the proposal is not already funded in the Women TechEU initiative and/or any other identical project to avoid double funding.
- j) None of the co-founders or employees of the organisation are currently working for any of the [Women TechEU beneficiaries](#).

### c. Experts' remote evaluation

The proposals that pass the eligibility check will move to the remote evaluation stage. These applications will be assessed by two external and independent evaluators composing the evaluation panel: one with technical, and another one with

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commercial business background. The evaluation panel will be selected seeking geographical and gender balance. Their knowledge and expertise in the thematic areas of the proposal will be considered.

The selected evaluators will be independent of the organisations involved in the consortium and of any third party applying to the call. The evaluators will sign a declaration of confidentiality concerning the contents of the proposals they read.

The evaluators will assess the proposals based on 3 different evaluation criteria (**Impact, Excellence, and Implementation**).

- 1) **Impact:** The impact is evaluated according to the following criteria:
  - a. The quality of the business plan;
  - b. The SWOT analysis i.e., whether it is realistic and convincing;
  - c. Their contribution to the green, digital, and social transition.
  
- 2) **Excellence:** projects must demonstrate high quality and a clear set of objectives aligned with the Women TechEU vision and with the general objectives of the project. The Excellence is evaluated according to the following criteria:
  - a. Alignment of the application with the call;
  - b. Degree of deep tech innovation i.e., going beyond the state-of-the-art, chances to succeed, its feasibility;
  - c. The growth potential of the proposed innovation/solution in terms of turnover, profit, and jobs, as well as its broader economic impact;
  - d. How critical this grant is for the company, and whether it will make a difference and add value to the company.
  - e. Their eagerness to pursue a EIC Accelerator grant in the near future.
  - f. IPR aspects.

- 3) **Implementation:** The implementation is evaluated according to the following criteria:
- a. Relevance of the woman (co-)founder role in the company i.e., whether the woman (co-)founder has a leading role in the company, whether she is the decision-maker, whether she has a management capacity and whether she can bring the company to the next level;
  - b. An overall gender balance and the position held by women in the start-up;
  - c. Team's skills, motivation, and commitment to execute the project;
  - d. Quality and efficiency of the work plan i.e., whether the proposed activities are sound and well explained, as well as whether these activities are most needed at this stage.

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

Table 1: Criteria score

Score	Definition
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	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

The total score will be calculated as the sum of the score of the 3 different criteria. **The threshold for each criterion will be three (3), while the overall score threshold will be ten (10).** That means if a proposal receives less than 3 in one criterion or less than 10 overall score, it will not be recommended for funding by the independent evaluators and will be automatically rejected.

### Score normalisation

The two evaluators will score the proposal differently without knowing the evaluation of their colleague, thus avoiding one evaluator conditioning the other. Therefore, the same evaluation may receive very different scores. The normalization step guarantees a more balanced distribution of scores and reduces the possibility of biases and distortions.

The normalisation process is performed as follows:

- The **External Evaluator Average** (EEA) and the **Overall Average Score** (OAS) of all proposals are calculated.
- Each EEA is compared to the OAS using a simple division ( $EEA / OAS$ ). As a result, the percentage each evaluator represents of the OAS is estimated. This has a double meaning:
  - Evaluators under 100% have a negative pattern against the average. Their scores will be then increased by a correction factor.
  - Evaluators above 100% have a positive pattern against the average. Their scores will be then decreased by a correction factor.
- **Correction Factor calculation:** Based on this formula  $1 + (1 - (EEA/OAS))$ . This factor is unique for each evaluator.
- The Correction Factor is applied to each criterion per evaluator. **Excellence x Correction Factor | Impact x Correction factor | Implementation x Correction factor.**
- Then the final score of each criterion is calculated as the average of each corrected score of the two evaluators on each proposal. (It may be the case that correction brings scores over a 5 in any criteria. In those cases, the score is capped at 5).
- The corrected scores are added, and the total score is calculated.

At the event that a divergence in the scores of over 20% persists, the two evaluators will hold a consensus meeting. The evaluators will then review their scores and a total score is calculated as a mathematical average of their new scores, not including any normalization process. There will be a consensus meeting only if the criteria and overall scores are above the thresholds (**The threshold for each criterion will be three (3), while the overall score threshold will be ten (10)**).

Proposals having not being bound to a consensus meeting will remain with their originally normalized score anyhow.

Finally, the shortlist is built from highest to lowest total score.

**Note:** The Women TechEU consortium reserves the right to improve productivity, statistics and efficiency by using AI tools in the process, although the final decision of award criteria will be always taken by the expert evaluators.

### **Final selection**

The criteria for the ranking of the proposals will be semi-automatic following the rules below:

- **Rule 1:** The proposals will be ranked based on their overall score calculated as described in the sections above.
- **Rule 2:** In case following Rule 1 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have higher score on the Impact award criterion.
- **Rule 3:** In case following Rule 2 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have higher score on the Excellence award criterion.
- **Rule 4:** In case following Rule 3 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have a higher score on the Implementation award criterion.
- **Rule 5:** In case following Rule 4 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to the total number of women in the team.
- **Rule 6:** in case following Rule 5 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to the youngest start-up by date of foundation.

At the end of the evaluation process, the Women TechEU consortium will then formally approve a list of proposals within the limits of the available funding, and it will be communicated to the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency for approval.

Then, the selected proposals will be invited to sign the sub-grantee agreement and participate in the programme.

At this stage, all applicants will be informed about the evaluation process: non-eligible, under threshold, approved but not selected, selected, and waiting list (3 applicants). Applicants will receive via email: a letter informing them of the decision and the following steps (if applicable) and an Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) in case of successful and evaluated but not successful proposals.

Statistical data about the proposals received will be published. To do that, the basic and anonymized information of the proposals will be used.

#### d. Appeals procedure

The Women TechEU consortium has established a process that allows applicants to appeal the decision of the consortium in the event their proposal is not selected for funding. If an applicant believes that there has been a deficiency in how their proposal was assessed, which could potentially impact the final funding decision, or if they believe that the results of eligibility checks are incorrect and do not adhere to the Open Call rules, resulting in harm to their interests, the following appeal procedure is available:

- Complaints, including clear evidence of the alleged error, must be submitted within **seven (calendar) days** from the date of receiving the evaluation results.
- The Women TechEU Team will thoroughly investigate complaints to determine if a re-evaluation of the proposal is justified. A decision will be communicated within no more than **twenty days from the date of receiving the complaint**, provided that all required information has been submitted by the complainant. If this timeline cannot be met, the complainant will be informed by email of the delay and given a new decision date.
- In instances where re-evaluation is deemed necessary, the outcome will directly replace the initial score without undergoing normalization or any other adjustment process. This clause is specifically designed to expedite the appeal resolution and prevent delays in the project's timeline.

To maintain the efficiency of the process, each proposal is allowed a single appeal. The decision reached at the end of the appeal process is final, concluding any further discussion regarding the proposal's evaluation.

The opinions by the reviewers are subjective and may not be the same as the applicant's. Our process ensures scores are normalised to reduce usual personal bias by the external experts and averaged to ensure consensus is met with the final score. Applicants may have different opinions about the outcome and opinions of the evaluators. Women TechEU open call team will not provide an opinion over the evaluators' opinion and scores unless a factual error is detected.

#### e. Validation of the legal entity

Prior to confirming the final list of accepted applicants, a thorough validation of the legal entities is performed. This validation step includes the submission of various documents to ensure compliance with the Women TechEU project's requirements. The requested elements for validation are:

- To validate the identity and the power of attorney of the person who will sign the sub-grantee, Women TechEU will ask for the **ID number and an ID scanned copy of the signatory**. On the scanned copy, personal information included on the ID card could be covered if not relevant for the contract signature such as religion, ethnicity and/or personal address. The picture, expiry date, name, surname, gender, number of the document and nationality should be visible without exception. Women TechEU will also ask for **the power of attorney** of the person who will sign the Sub-grantee agreement.
  - **SME declaration (see Annex 2)**: form based on the standard templates by the EC in which Women TechEU can verify the ownership structure and financial figures to verify the size of the company.
  - **Balance Sheet and P&L accounts** for the last two closed years (if applicable) and the most recent CAP table (shareholding distribution). In companies with linked
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- or associated entities, additional information (accounts for mother companies, group trees, etc.) could be requested.
- For entities that are already validated by the European Commission's Funding and Tenders Portal that count with a registered and validated PIC Number, we will request:
    - The PIC Number and a screenshot of the Funding and Tenders portal in which it's evidenced the type of organisation which has been selected as a beneficiary is required.
  - For entities without a validated PIC number OR without a validated status (like self-declared SMEs), we will request:
    - **Legal entity form.** The Legal Entity form for private companies, and public law bodies necessary for the awarding of EU funding. Company Register, Official Journal and so forth, showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number and public law bodies necessary for the awarding of EU funding. Company Register, Official Journal and so forth, showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number and
    - **VAT Number registration** (if applicable), a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent).

**A legal entity that does not provide the requested data and documents in due time will not be awarded.**

#### f. Sub-grantee agreement preparation

After the validation of the Legal Entity, a written Sub-grantee agreement will be signed with successful applicants, and the Women TechEU coordinator will request the applicant to fill a Financial Identification Form (FIF).

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- **Sub-grantee funding agreement.** Signed between the Consortium (represented by the coordinator: EIT Manufacturing West) and the beneficiary.
- **Financial Identification Form (FIF).** Form identifying the account to which the funds will be transferred signed by the legal representative of the organisation and including a bank statement showing the ownership of the account. The coordinator of the consortium, EIT Manufacturing West, will also provide additional security measures to verify the ownership of the account.

All the legal issues are accurately covered by the planned contracts with the sub-granted beneficiaries. The sub-grantee agreement will foresee, among other things, the special clauses derived from Horizon Europe in cascading granting, the payment schedule, and conditions (milestones), general legal text issues of rights and obligations by the Women TechEU consortium and each sub-grantee, including IPR. It will also have a set of annexes such as the description of the project, the Financial Identification Form and any other document required by Women TechEU consortium to assure the correct execution of the sub-granted projects.

After signing the sub-grantee agreement, beneficiaries will be eligible to participate in the Women TechEU Programme of services.

## 6. Beneficiaries' Responsibilities

The selected organisations are indirectly beneficiaries of European Commission funding. As such, they are responsible for the proper use of the funding and ensure that the recipients comply with obligations under Horizon specific requirements. The obligations that are applicable to the recipients include:

### a. Conflict of interest

Beneficiaries must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the sub-project is compromised for reasons involving

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economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests'). They must formally notify to the Women TechEU coordinator without delay any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interest and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation. The Women TechEU coordinator may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline. If the sub-grantee beneficiary breaches any of its obligations, the sub-grantee agreement may be automatically terminated. Moreover, payments may be forfeited or returned.

#### **b. Data protection and confidentiality**

During implementation of the sub-project and for five years after the end of the sub-project, the parties must keep confidential any data, documents or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential at sub-grantee signing time ('confidential information').

#### **c. Promotion of the action and EU Funding visibility**

The beneficiary must promote their participation in the Women TechEU project and the benefits obtained as a result of participating in the programme. They will provide targeted information to multiple audiences (including the media and the public) in a strategic and effective manner and to highlight the financial support of the EC.

The Women TechEU communication team will guide, provide materials and support these communication activities. Unless the European Commission or the Women TechEU coordinator requests, or agrees otherwise or unless it is impossible, any communication activity related to the action (including in electronic form, via social media, etc.), any publicity, including at a conference or seminar or any type of information or promotional material (brochure, leaflet, poster, presentation etc.), and any infrastructure, equipment and major results funded by the grant must:

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- display the EU emblem;
- display the Women TechEU logo.

When displayed in association with a logo, the European emblem should be given appropriate prominence. This obligation to use the European emblem in respect of projects to which the EC contributes implies no right of exclusive use. It is subject to general third-party use restrictions which do not permit the appropriation of the emblem, or of any similar trademark or logo, whether by registration or by any other means. Under these conditions, the Beneficiary is exempted from the obligation to obtain prior permission from the EC to use the emblem. Further detailed information on the EU emblem can be found on the [Europa web page](#).

Any publicity made by the beneficiary in respect of the project, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, must specify that it reflects only the author's views and that the EC or Women TechEU project is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein. The EC and the Women TechEU consortium shall be authorized to publish, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, the following information:

- the name of the beneficiary;
  - town and country of origin of the beneficiary;
  - the general purpose of the project;
  - the amount of the financial contribution foreseen for the project after the final payment, and the amount of the financial contribution actually received;
  - the geographic location of the activities carried out;
  - the details/references and the abstracts of scientific publications relating to the foreground and, if funded within the sub-project, the published version or the final manuscript accepted for publication;
  - the publishable summaries of reports submitted to the Women TechEU consortium;
  - any picture or any audio-visual or web material provided to the EC and Women TechEU in the framework of the project.
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The beneficiary shall ensure that all necessary authorisations for such publication have been obtained and that the publication of the information by the EC and Women TechEU does not infringe any rights of third parties. Upon a duly substantiated request by the beneficiary, Women TechEU, if such permission is provided by the EC, may agree to forego such publicity if disclosure of the information indicated above would risk compromising the beneficiary's security, academic or commercial interests.

Beneficiaries may be asked by the Women TechEU dissemination team to provide some informational material about their projects for promotion on the official Women TechEU platforms and social media channels.

#### d. Financial audits and control

The European Commission (EC) will monitor compliance with the financial support conditions outlined in Annex I of the Women TechEU Grant Agreement by beneficiaries and third parties. The EC may conduct financial audits, which may be conducted by external auditors or by EC services, including the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). Beneficiaries must make all detailed information and data available to the EC or any authorized representative for audit purposes. The beneficiary must keep all sub-project deliverables and documents for up to five years from the end of the project.

#### e. Internal communication

Each of the applicants selected to join the programme must nominate a primary contact point that will act as a co-ordinator during the duration of the programme.

- Provide any notice in writing to the Women TechEU project coordinator.
- Notify immediately of any change of persons or contact details to [helpdesk@womentecheuropa.eu](mailto:helpdesk@womentecheuropa.eu). The address list shall be accessible to all concerned.

#### f. External communication and open data

Each funded organisation will be publicly listed at Women TechEU public channels including social networks, website and others as identified. The funding disbursed by the Women TechEU consortium to each of the beneficiaries will be made public under a dataset that will be uploaded into an open a free repository as it is Zenodo.