



INNOBUYER CALL FOR EIC SOLVERS

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

DOCUMENT REVISION HISTORY

Version	Date	Description of change
V1.0	28/03/2024	First version

DISCLAIMER

The European Commission is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained herein.

© 2024 InnoBuyer

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	5
2 THE CALL FOR EIC SOLVERS	5
3 ACTIVITIES TO BE FUNDED	8
4 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	12
5 EVALUATION CRITERIA	16
6 APPLICATION SUBMISSION	18
7 EVALUATION PROCESS	19
8 CONTRACTING	23
9 RESPONSIBILITIES OF BENEFICIARIES	24
10 SELF-ASSESSMENT BEFORE SUBMISSION	29
11 OTHER OPEN CALL DOCUMENTS	30
12 CONTACTS	31

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: INNOBUYER EVALUATION PROCESS	19
--	----

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: INNOBUYER CALL FOR EIC SOLVERS SUMMARY	5
TABLE 2: TIMELINE	8
TABLE 3 : PILOT CO-CREATION DELIVERABLES	9
TABLE 4 : INNOBUYER FUNDING SUPPORT	11
TABLE 5 : INNOBUYER EVALUATION CRITERIA	16

GLOSSARY

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Call for EIC Solvers	<p>A call inviting innovative Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) (current or in the past) supported by the European Innovation Council (EIC) and Public Organisations to collaborate in addressing specific innovation needs through pilot projects.</p> <p>A joint submission is required from consortia to develop and co-create solutions for identified innovation needs from the Public organisation.</p>
Challenger	Public organisation that has a Challenge that requires an innovative solution and aims to co-create a pilot with an EIC company.
Challenge	A description of a real and specific organisational innovation need, that is currently not met and for which a solution is not yet available or widely available on the market.
EIC Solver	EIC beneficiary Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) that proposes a solution for a specific Challenge and is selected to co-create a pilot with the corresponding Challenger.
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise as defined by the European Commission .
Application	Submission of online form to apply for the Call for EIC Solvers, through the F6S platform .
Proposal	A PDF file detailing a solution/pilot, following the template provided in this Call for EIC Solvers (Annex 1 - Proposal Template).
Co-creation agreement	A contract signed between the InnoBuyer Consortium leader, a Challenger and a EIC Solver, defining the framework of rights and obligations of the contracting parties, including but not

TERM	DESCRIPTION
	limited to ground rules for receiving financial support and a description of the work to be carried out.
Sub-grantee	Challengers or EIC Solvers that sign a co-creation agreement with the InnoBuyer Consortium leader.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THIS DOCUMENT

This document explains how the InnoBuyer Call for EIC Solvers works, defining the terms and conditions to apply for it, including the eligibility and evaluation criteria, financial support available, application and evaluation process. It is complemented by other open call documents listed in section 6.1, which can be found on the InnoBuyer website on <https://innobuyer.eu/eic-solvers/> and that must be considered by applicants for the submission of a proposal.

1.2 CONTEXT

The integration of innovation within public organisations is paramount for enhancing service delivery to citizens and customers, fostering efficiency and effectiveness. While these organisations can readily procure established solutions from the market, there is a frequent scenario where their needs outpace existing offerings. These unmet needs necessitate innovative solutions tailored to their specific requirements, often demanding development and customisation beyond what is currently available in the market.

1.3 INNOBUYER

InnoBuyer offers a programme that brings together *Challengers* (public entities with unmet innovation needs) and *Solvers* (Innovative SMEs), to jointly co-create new solutions, applying a demand-driven approach.

InnoBuyer is a project funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe programme, *via* the European Innovation Council, under the grant agreement 101071212.

2 THE CALL FOR EIC SOLVERS

2.1 OBJECTIVES

The InnoBuyer Call for EIC Solvers aims to select and fund 4 innovative EIC SMEs (Solvers), to co-create pilots addressing the specific innovation needs (Challenges) of public organisations (Challengers) of their choice. EIC solvers must team up with a public organisation of choice, from any sector, and propose a new Challenge to be solved (only

available for SMEs previously or currently funded by the EIC – European Innovation Council).

Once the Top 4 Challenger/EIC Solver consortia for this Open Call for EIC Solvers get selected, Challengers and Solvers will co-create and pilot an innovative solution (Action 3). Challengers will also receive support to prepare the launch of an innovation procurement procedure (Action 4) for the wide adoption of the solution.

2.2 OPEN CALL SUMMARY

TABLE 1: INNOBUYER OPEN CALL FOR EIC SOLVERS' SUMMARY

Who can apply	<p>Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are considered EIC beneficiaries (previously or currently funded)</p> <p>Other eligibility criteria may apply as described in section 4</p>
Open call timeline	<p>From the 4th of April 2024 to the 6th of June 2024 at 17:00 Central European Time (CET).</p>
Activities to be funded	<p>For the EIC Solver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-creation and deployment of a pilot in collaboration with a public organisation (Challenger) <p>For the Challenger:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-creation and deployment of a pilot in collaboration with an Innovative EIC beneficiary SME (EIC Solver) Development of Terms of Reference specifications (Challenger only)
Duration of the activities	<p>10 months (Action 3 - Pilot co-creation)</p> <p>7 months (Action 4 - ToR development)</p>

Funding available	Total: 260.000 Euros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 55.000 Euros per selected Solver • Up to 10.000 Euros per selected Challenger
Number of applications to be selected	4 applications are expected to be selected
Type of funding	Grant (equity-free)
Milestones/ payments	Payments are associated with the results of selected applicants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st payment after approval of interim report on the co-creation deployment (EIC Solver and Challenger) • 2nd payment after approval of final report on the co-creation deployment (EIC Solver and Challenger) • 3rd payment after approval of report describing the tender documentation (Challenger)

2.3 CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS

EIC beneficiary SMEs can apply, in collaboration with a public organisation that has its own challenge to solve. Applications from any sector are welcomed and eligible for funding since this Call for EIC Solvers is sector agnostic. Some examples are (but not restricted/limited to): healthcare, energy, transport, or justice.

2.4 TIMELINE

Below are presented the current tentative dates for the different phases. The dates can be subject to change in case of any modifications in the InnoBuyer project's schedule.

TABLE 2: TIMELINE

DESCRIPTION	TENTATIVE DATES
Open call for EIC Solvers	04 April to 06 June 2024 17:00 CET
Eligibility checks & eligibility communication	07 June to 11 June 2024
Appeal of Eligibility results	13 June 2024 17:00 CET
Eligibility appeal decision	14 June 2024
Evaluation of applications	17 June to 12 July 2024
Contracting phase	15 to 26 July 2024
1 st Phase of pilot co-creation (Action 3)	August to December 2024
2 nd Phase of pilot co-creation (Action 3)	January to May 2025
Development of Terms of Reference specifications (Action 4 for Challengers only)	February 2025 to August 2025

3 ACTIVITIES TO BE FUNDED

3.1 PILOT CO-CREATION

Each pair of selected Challenger and EIC Solver is expected to collaborate for a period of 10 months to implement the solution/pilot proposed by the EIC Solver to address the Challenge presented by the Challenger, notably by:

- o implementing a round of co-creation sessions bringing together Challenger and EIC Solver personnel, for co-developing a joint solution.
- o piloting the co-created solution in a real environment to test its functionality and assess its effectiveness.

3.2 DEVELOPMENT OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Challenger can have access to financial support (5.000 EUR.) to hire legal services to:

- design and deliver, Terms of Reference (ToR) for a simplified form of innovation procurement,
- develop follow-up strategies for the adoption of ToR, leading to the implementation of simplified innovation procurement in the future.

3.3 DELIVERABLES

The selected Challengers and Solvers are expected to submit deliverables according to the details presented in the table below. The dates can be subject to change in case of any modifications in the InnoBuyer project's schedule.

TABLE 3 : PILOT CO-CREATION DELIVERABLES

#	Deliverable	Description	Due Date
D3.1	Interim report on pilot co-creation deployment	Report describing the implementation of the activities, including co-creation sessions held, the status of the pilot deployment and results achieved at this stage. It must indicate and justify any major deviations from the original plan and lessons learnt to improve the rest of the co-creation period.	December 2024
D3.2	Final report on pilot co-creation deployment	Report presenting an overview of the implementation of the activities, including co-creation sessions held, pilot deployed, and results achieved. It must include an evaluation by the Challenger team of	May 2025

#	Deliverable	Description	Due Date
		whether the solution achieved the initial objectives.	
D4.1	Terms of Reference specifications (Only for Challengers)	A document that clearly, accurately and completely describes in detail what the Challengers want to purchase and how to do it.	August 2025

3.4 EVALUATION OF SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION

The InnoBuyer Consortium will evaluate the Challengers and Solvers' work and progress based on the deliverables that must be submitted within the defined deadlines.

After the submission of each deliverable, an online review meeting will take place via a teleconference platform (e.g. Zoom) in which each Challenger and Solver will make a presentation of the work done, analyse their progress and answer questions from the InnoBuyer Consortium. After each online review, the Challengers and Solvers will receive a review report, including comments and potential recommendations. The report will also state if the deliverables are accepted or not.

- o On acceptance of the deliverables, the Challengers and Solvers will be requested to send a financial statement (template to be provided by the InnoBuyer Consortium) requesting the voucher for the corresponding phase. Payments will be released no later than thirty (30) natural days after the InnoBuyer Consortium receives the financial statement.
- o In the event of rejection of any deliverables or unsatisfactory review, the InnoBuyer Consortium retains the prerogative to remove a Challenger or Solver from the InnoBuyer Programme without remittance of the corresponding voucher and before proceeding to the subsequent phase. A solitary opportunity for resubmission of the rejected deliverable shall be granted within the timeframe delineated by the consortium. Thus, being granted advancement to the first phase does not inherently guarantee progression to the second phase if the executed work fails to meet the anticipated standards.

3.5 SUPPORT PROVIDED AND ORIGIN OF THE FUNDS

3.5.1 FINANCIAL SUPPORT

InnoBuyer funding is results-driven, provided as vouchers in a lump sum. As such, there is no need for a traditional administrative justification system (e.g., counting hourly dedication or calculating workload), but getting the funding is associated with the acceptance of the agreed deliverables. Selected applicants will become part of the InnoBuyer programme. Payments will be done in instalments based on concrete results, deliverables and a review of each phase.

3.5.2 FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR CHALLENGERS AND SOLVERS

The Open Call for EIC Solvers has established the maximum funding limit that a selected applicant can receive as follows:

- EIC Solver: eligible to receive and retain up to €55,000.
- Challenger: eligible to receive and retain up to €10,000.

A summary of funding support and payment schedule is presented in the table below. The dates can be subject to change in case of any modifications in the InnoBuyer project's schedule.

TABLE 4 : INNOBUYER FUNDING SUPPORT

Action	Deliverable	Payment trigger	Expected payment date	Amount
Pilot co-creation	Submission of D3.1 Interim report on the pilot co-creation deployment, using a template provided by the InnoBuyer Consortium.	Acceptance of the submitted deliverable by the InnoBuyer Consortium.	January/February 2025	€2.000 for Challenger €27.500 for Solver
	Submission of D3.2 Final report on the pilot co-creation deployment, using a template provided	Acceptance of the submitted deliverable by	June/July 2025	€3.000 for Challenger

	by the InnoBuyer Consortium.	the InnoBuyer Consortium.		€27.500 for EIC Solver
Development of Terms of Reference specifications	Submission of D4.1 Terms of Reference specifications, using a template provided by the InnoBuyer Consortium.	Acceptance of the submitted deliverable by the InnoBuyer Consortium.	August /September 2025	€5.000 for Challenger
Total amount available for each selected Challenger				Up to €10.000
Total amount available for each selected Solver				Up to €55.000

Detailed and definitive payment schedule and payment conditions will be settled in the Co-creation Agreement.

3.5.3 ORIGIN OF THE FUNDS

All selected applicants will sign a Co-creation Agreement with the InnoBuyer consortium. The funds attached to the Co-creation Agreement come directly from the funds of the European Project InnoBuyer, funded itself by the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA), and remain, therefore, property of the EU until the payment of the balance, whose management rights have been transferred to the project partners in InnoBuyer via European Commission Grant Agreement Number 101071212. As can be seen in the Model Co-creation Agreement (Annex 5), this relationship between the selected applicants and the European Commission through the InnoBuyer project carries a set of obligations to the Subgrantees with the European Commission. It is the task of the Subgrantees to accomplish them, and of the InnoBuyer consortium partners to inform about them.

4 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

All applicants must comply with the requirements described in this section, and subsections, to be considered eligible for the InnoBuyer Open Call for EIC Solvers.

4.1 BENEFICIARIES

The application must be submitted by a consortia composed by:

- one Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) that is considered an EIC beneficiary
- one Public Organisation.

The SME (Solver)

An SME will be considered as such if it complies with the European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC¹ and the SME user guide². As a summary, SMEs are enterprises which:

- a) employ fewer than 250 persons; and
- b) have either an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million or an annual total balance sheet not exceeding EUR 43 million.

Start-ups that do not have an annual turnover or balance sheets yet, are also considered eligible given that they fulfil the criteria (a) and (b) of this section at submission time.

In case an SME is awarded, it will remain eligible even if, at a certain point during the execution of InnoBuyer activities, it does not fulfil criteria (a) or (b) of this section.

Importantly, the SME must also fulfil the following criteria:

- **previously or currently funded by the European Innovation Council**, notably by participating in one of the following EIC funded programmes: SME Instrument, FastTrack to Innovation (FTI), Future and Emerging Technologies Open (FET-Open), EIC Accelerator, EIC Pathfinder or EIC Transition,
- and, legally established in any of the following countries (hereafter collectively identified as the “Eligible Countries”) are eligible:
 - The Member States (MS) of the European Union (EU), including their outermost regions;
 - The Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) linked to the Member States;
 - Horizon Europe associated countries according to the [updated list published by the EC](#)

¹ European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC²¹: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32003H0361>

² SME User guide: <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/42921>

The Public Organisation (Challenger)

- defined as such according to Article 2 of Directive 2014/24 EC, and either being a) the State, regional or local authorities, b) bodies governed by public law or c) associations formed by one or more such authorities or one or more such bodies governed by public law.

Each consortium must be led by the SME.

4.1.1 ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS

In addition, the following conditions apply:

- The applicants should not:
 - have convictions for fraudulent behaviour, other financial irregularities, unethical or illegal business practices.
 - have been declared bankrupt or have initiated bankruptcy procedures.
 - be under liquidation or an enterprise under difficulty according to the Commission Regulation No 651/2014, art. 2.18
 - be excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law, or by a decision of both national or EU authority
- Proposals from Linked SMEs³ must demonstrate that there is no risk of double funding. The fundamental principle underpinning the rules for public expenditure in the EU states that no costs for the same activity can be funded twice from the EU budget, as defined in the Article 111 of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation. In the case of proposals submitted by linked SMEs, all must clearly state the differences between them including but not limited to, technical aspects, market strategy and team composition, so that there remains no doubt that there is no risk of double funding. In order to properly assess these concerns InnoBuyer may assign all proposals to the same set of evaluators and, should any doubt remain, exclude all proposals.
- Challengers (public organisations) that have been involved in Action 1 and Action 2 of InnoBuyer Programme are eligible for this Open Call for EIC Solvers.
- EIC Solvers (SMEs) that have already been selected for funding under the scope of the Innobuyer Programme previous actions, are not eligible for this Open Call.

³ Please check the definition of Linked SME on the “User guide to the SME definition” available at <https://op.europa.eu/s/n3t1>

- Challengers (public organisations) and EIC Solvers (SMEs) that have previously applied to any Innobuyer' Programme previous actions but not selected for funding will be deemed eligible for this Open Call for EIC Solvers.

4.2 LANGUAGE

English is the official language for the InnoBuyer Call for EIC Solvers. Proposals submitted in any other language will be deemed ineligible and will not be evaluated.

English is also the official language to be used to communicate with the InnoBuyer consortium during the whole execution of the InnoBuyer programme, for example in meetings, deliverables listed in section 3.5.2, and other administrative documents.

Other languages can be used between Challengers and EIC Solvers for the development of the pilots according to the language requirements defined by each Challenger.

4.3 MULTIPLE SUBMISSION

Only one proposal will be accepted for funding per applicant. In the case of a multiple submission, only the last one received (timestamp of the system) will enter into the evaluation process, the rest being declared as non-eligible without the right for an appeal. If the last submitted proposal is declared then non-eligible or fails to reach the thresholds of the evaluation, the other proposals submitted earlier will not be considered for evaluation in any case.

4.4 DOCUMENTATION FORMAT & REQUISITES

Any document requested in any of the phases must be submitted electronically in PDF format without restrictions for printing.

All applicants must use qualified digital signatures exclusively in all documents included in the proposal, subsequent Annexes (section 11) and co-creation/subgrant agreements. A qualified electronic signature is an advanced electronic signature which is additionally: created by a qualified signature creation device (QSCD); and is based on a qualified certificate for electronic signatures. Applicants may use any Digital Signature Services that support qualified digital signatures. The European Commission proposes a demo of DSS (Digital Signature Services), a tool enabling, among other features, the signature of documents. More information about qualified digital signatures is available [here](#).

Digital signatures based on the process that leverages the digital certificate stored on the Citizen Card (or equivalent national identification document) to enable secure and legally recognized digital signatures for various online activities will be accepted.

Images (photographs and/or digital scans) of physical signatures will not be accepted.

4.5 SUBMISSION SYSTEM

Only proposals submitted through the Open Call submission tool (F6S platform) at <https://www.f6s.com/innobuyer-open-call-for-eic-solvers/apply> and within the Call duration will be accepted. Proposals submitted by any other means, will not be evaluated. Only the documentation included in the application will be considered by evaluators. It will be composed by a form with administrative questions to be completed directly in the platform, and the Annex 1: Proposal template. The information provided should be actual, true and complete and should allow the assessment of the proposal. The regular functioning of the F6S platform limits to one application submission per F6S user in each call.

If the proposal is selected to receive funding, additional documents will be requested as referred to in section 11- Other Open Call Documents.

4.6 DATA PROTECTION

In order to process and evaluate applications, the InnoBuyer consortium will need to collect Personal and Industrial Data. F6S Network Ireland Limited, will act as Data Controller for data submitted through the F6S platform for these purposes. A Data Protection Officer (DPO) has been appointed by F6S generally, to ensure compliance with data protection regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and that personal data is collected, processed, and stored in a secure manner.

The F6S platform's system design and operational procedures ensure that data is managed in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). Each applicant will accept the F6S terms to ensure compliance. Please refer to <https://www.f6s.com/privacy-policy> to review the F6S platform's privacy policy and data security policy.

Apart from the F6S platform, data will also be stored in the F6S Google Drive.

Please note that the InnoBuyer consortium must retain generated data until five years after the balance of the InnoBuyer project is paid or longer if there are ongoing procedures

(such as audits, investigations or litigation). In this case, the data must be kept until they end.

4.7 DEADLINE

Only proposals submitted before the deadline will be accepted. After the call closure no additions or changes to received proposals will be taken into account. The deadline for this call is June 6th, 2024, at 17:00 CET (Brussels time).

4.8 ABSENCE OF CONFLICT

Applicants shall not have any actual or/and potential conflict of interest with the InnoBuyer selection process and during the whole project. All cases of conflict of interest will be assessed case by case. In particular, applicants cannot be InnoBuyer Consortium partners or affiliated entities nor their employees or co-operators under a contractual agreement.

5 EVALUATION CRITERIA

The criteria for proposal evaluation will be the following:

TABLE 5: INNOBUYER EVALUATION CRITERIA

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	WEIGHTING
Excellence	Extent that proposed solution is ambitious, has innovation potential, and is beyond the state of the art, enhancing the innovation capacity and the integration of new knowledge & the implementation of such innovations to the market.	30%
Alignment	The extent to which the solution is aligned with the targeted challenge, notably its compulsory requirements.	25%
Commitment	Extend to which the proposal demonstrates that the pilot impacts the challenger's business and ambition to go beyond the pilot implementation.	20%

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	WEIGHTING
	In case of a challenge not proposed by InnoBuyer, the extent to which the Challenger shows a strong commitment and involvement will also be assessed.	
Implementation & value for money	<p>Appropriateness of the pilot planning and budget associated with each phase.</p> <p>Appropriateness of the resources to implement the pilot and experience of team members in the challenger's sector.</p>	25%

The experts will score each award criterion on a scale from 0 to 5 (decimal and centesimal point scores may be given):

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.

For each criterion, the minimum threshold is 3 out of 5 points. The overall default threshold, considering the sum of the individual scores is 15. That means if a proposal receives less than 3 in one criterion or less than 15 in the overall score it is automatically rejected.

6 APPLICATION SUBMISSION

6.1 APPLICATION PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

To submit an application, applicants should follow these steps:

1. Go to <https://innobuyer.eu/eic-solvers/> and carefully read the open call documents composed by the:
 - Guidelines for Applicants (This document)
 - Annex 1: Proposal template
 - Annex 2: Declaration of honour
 - Annex 3: Bank account information
 - Annex 4: SME declaration
 - Annex 5: Co-creation agreement template
2. Go to <https://www.f6s.com/innobuyer-open-call-for-eic-solvers/apply> to fill in the application form through the F6S platform (applicants are required to register a profile at F6S to be able to submit an application), answer all mandatory questions and submit the application.

Applicants are encouraged to be concrete and concise. Each proposal shall not exceed the page limits indicated in the Proposal Template.

It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the application. Failure of the application to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays or working from multiple browsers or multiple browser windows, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the application as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

6.2 APPLICATION RECEPTION

Submissions will ONLY be done via the [F6S platform](#).

A full list of applicants will be drafted containing their basic information for statistical purposes and clarity, which will be also shared with the European Commission for transparency.

6.3 DATA PROTECTION

In order to process and evaluate applications, InnoBuyer will need to collect Personal and Industrial Data. F6S Network Ireland Limited IE, as the Open Call Manager of the project, will act as Data Controller for data submitted through the F6S platform for these purposes. The F6S platform's system design and operational procedures ensure that data is managed in compliance with The General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). Each applicant will accept the F6S terms to ensure compliance. Please note that InnoBuyer requests the minimum information needed to deliver the evaluation procedures or the support programme. Annexes Declaration of Honour, Bank Account Information, SME declaration and Co-creation Agreement are provided for reference and will only be requested if the applicant is accepted in the InnoBuyer support programme. Please refer to <https://www.f6s.com/privacy-policy> to check the F6S platform data privacy policy and security.

7 EVALUATION PROCESS

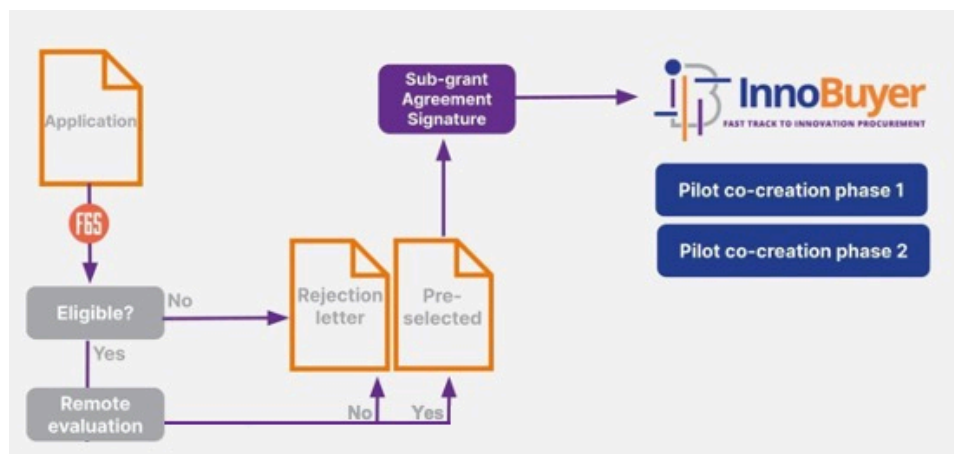


FIGURE 1: INNOBUYER EVALUATION PROCESS

7.1 ELIGIBILITY CHECK

A combination of automated filtering and manual review processes will be utilised to sift through applications, ensuring adherence to the eligibility criteria outlined in Section 4 of this document. Applicants should be mindful that, given the semi-automated evaluation tools in use, all provided information will undergo thorough verification. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure the accuracy of all fields within the online form. Any inclusion of erroneous information may result in the rejection of the proposal on the grounds of ineligibility. In cases where a proposal is deemed ineligible through manual verification,

applicants will be promptly notified of its status and provided with a 48-hour window to submit a rebuttal.

7.2 REMOTE EVALUATION

After the eligibility filter, the final proposals shortlist for evaluation will be created.

Then, the proposals will be given to one (1) internal and two (2) external evaluators with experience in the procurement of innovation and with relevant technical expertise for the proposed solutions, bound by a confidentiality agreement and non-conflict of interest declaration. Every proposal will be evaluated, according to the evaluation criteria described in section 5. At the end of this phase, the proposals will be ranked.

7.3 CONSENSUS AND FINAL SCORES

The evaluators will have the opportunity to share, compare and revise, if necessary, their scores aiming to reach a consensus about the ranking of proposals.

7.4 FINAL RANKING AND SELECTION

7.4.1 FINAL RANKING

At the end of the evaluation process, the proposals will be ranked taking into account the revised scores from the consensus process. The criteria for the ranking of the proposals will be semi-automatic following the rules below:

- o **Rule 1:** The proposals will be ranked based on their overall score.
- o **Rule 2:** In case following Rule 1 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have a higher score on the Commitment award criterion.
- o **Rule 3:** In case following Rule 2 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have a higher score on the Excellence award criterion.

7.4.2 SELECTION

The top-4-ranked proposals will be selected for funding and the list of selected proposals will be submitted to the European Commission for final screening.

7.5 COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS

Every applicant will receive via e-mail:

- o An Evaluation Summary Report (ESR)
- o A letter informing of a rejection decision or invitation to enter the negotiation phase.

7.6 CHANGES IN THE OPEN CALL

InnoBuyer may conclude that there are not enough proposals with adequate quality (indicated by their evaluation scores meeting or exceeding specific predefined thresholds), in which case it will make no selection or select fewer proposals than the funding budget allows. This conclusion is obligatory if not enough proposals score above the threshold given on the bespoke evaluation form.

InnoBuyer reserves the right to cancel the Open Call at any point due to any unforeseen circumstances beyond control.

7.7 APPEAL PROCEDURE

If, the applicant considers that a mistake has been made or that the evaluators have acted unfairly or have failed to comply with the rules of this Call for EIC Solvers, and that their interests have been prejudiced as a result, the following appeal procedure is available.

A complaint should be drawn up in English and submitted by email to info@innobuyer.eu.

Any complaint made should include the following:

- o contact details,
- o the subject of the complaint,
- o information and evidence regarding the alleged breach.

Anonymous complaints or those not providing the mentioned information will not be considered.

Complaints at this stage (after receiving the Evaluation Summary Report with the results/scores and comments from the evaluators) should also be made within five calendar days since the evaluation results are presented to the applicants.

As a general rule, the InnoBuyer Consortium will investigate the complaints with a view to arriving at a decision to issue a formal notice or to close the case within no more than

twenty days from the date of reception of the complaint, provided that all required information has been submitted by the complainant. Where this time limit is exceeded, the InnoBuyer Consortium will inform the complainant by email.

Please note:

- o This procedure only concerns the evaluation and/or eligibility checking process. The InnoBuyer Consortium will not call into question the scientific or technical judgement of appropriately qualified experts.
- o A re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that affects the final decision on whether to fund an applicant or not. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if a proposal has failed anyway on other criteria.
- o The evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. It may be lower than the original score.

8 CONTRACTING

8.1 CONTRACT PREPARATION

After the Open Call evaluation conclusion and application selection, the InnoBuyer coordinator will start the contract preparation (Co-creation agreement) in collaboration with each pair of Challenger and Solver. Contract preparation will go via administrative and financial checking (and potentially into technical or ethical/security negotiations) based on evaluators' comments. On a case-by-case approach, a phone call or teleconference may be needed for clarification.

The objective of the contract preparation is fulfilling the legal requirements between the InnoBuyer Consortium and every beneficiary of the open call. The items covered will be:

- o Inclusion of the comments (if any) in the Evaluation Summary Report of the proposals and mapping to the Co-creation agreement (contract).
- o To validate the status information of the Challengers and EIC Solvers according to the definition included in section 4 'Eligibility Criteria' of this document. The following documents will be required from both the EIC Solver and the Challenger (when applicable):

Legal existence: Organisation Register, Official Gazette or another official document per country showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number and a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent). (EIC Solvers and Challengers)

Declaration of honour: Document that ensures that the sub-grantee complies with the rules and is not in a situation that would exclude it from receiving EU funding. (EIC Solvers and Challengers)

Bank account information & Onboarding form: The account where the funds will be transferred will be indicated via a form signed by the sub-grantee representative and the bank representative. The account should be a business bank account. (EIC Solvers and Challengers)

SME declaration: A self-assessment document confirming that the Solvers complies with the SME definition. (For EIC Solvers only)

The request, by InnoBuyer Consortium, for the above documentation will be done within the deadlines. In general, the contracting phase should be concluded within **2 weeks**. An additional week may be provided by the InnoBuyer coordinator in case of significant reasoning. In case contracting has not been concluded within the above period, the proposal can be rejected and the next proposal in the ranking list can be invited.

8.2 CONTRACT SIGNATURE

At the end of the negotiation phase, a Co-creation Agreement (Contract) will be signed between the InnoBuyer Consortium represented by its coordinator (F6S) and each selected Challenger and EIC Solvers.

Please note:

- o The co-creation agreement/contract will cover the 2 phases of the pilot co-creation activities.
- o The co-creation agreement will automatically expire at the end of each phase without any further notice from InnoBuyer, in case the concerned sub-grantee does not enter or qualify for the next phase or if the Declaration of Honour is violated.

9 RESPONSIBILITIES OF BENEFICIARIES

The selected applicants are indirect 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 Europe. The obligations that are applicable to the recipients⁴ include the following.

9.1 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The selected applicants must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the InnoBuyer activities is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

They must formally notify the InnoBuyer coordinator without delay of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation.

⁴ The obligations described here are not binding and may be modified, refined or additional obligations may be inserted during the negotiation phase if needed.

The InnoBuyer coordinator may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

If the selected applicant breaches any of its obligations, the Co-creation Agreement may be automatically terminated. Moreover, payments may be stopped.

9.2 DATA PROTECTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

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

If a selected applicant requests, the Commission and the InnoBuyer Consortium may agree to keep such information confidential for an additional period beyond the initial five years. This will be explicitly stated in the Co-creation agreement.

If the information has been identified as confidential during the InnoBuyer programme or only orally, it will be considered to be confidential only if this is accepted by the InnoBuyer coordinator and confirmed in writing within 15 days of the oral disclosure. Unless otherwise agreed between the parties, they may use confidential information only to implement the Co-creation Agreement.

The selected applicants may disclose confidential information to the InnoBuyer consortium and to the selected reviewers, who will be bound by a specific Non-Disclosure Agreement.

9.3 PROMOTING THE ACTION AND GIVING VISIBILITY TO THE EU FUNDING

The selected Challengers and Solvers must promote the InnoBuyer programme and its results, by providing targeted information to multiple audiences in a strategic and effective manner and highlight the financial support of the European Union.

Unless the European Commission or the InnoBuyer 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:

- (a) display the EU emblem;
- (b) display the InnoBuyer logo and
- (c) include the following text:

"This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the InnoBuyer project (Grant Agreement 101071212)"

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 sub-grantee 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 European Commission web page⁵.

Any publicity made by selected Challengers and Solvers in respect of the InnoBuyer programme, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, must specify that it reflects only the author's views and that the EC or InnoBuyer project is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

The EC and the InnoBuyer Consortium shall be authorised to publish, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, the following information:

- o the name of the selected Challengers and Solvers;
- o contact address of the selected Challengers and Solvers;
- o the general purpose of the Challenger and Solver's participation in the InnoBuyer programme;
- o the amount of the financial contribution foreseen for the Challengers and Solver; after the final payment, and the amount of the financial contribution actually received;
- o the geographic location of the activities carried out;
- o the list of dissemination activities and/or of the patent (applications) relating to the foreground;
- o the details/references and the abstracts of scientific publications relating to the foreground and, if funded within the InnoBuyer project, the published version or the final manuscript accepted for publication;
- o the publishable reports submitted to InnoBuyer;
- o any picture or any audio-visual or web material provided to the EC and InnoBuyer in the framework of the project.

The selected applicants shall ensure that all necessary authorisations for such publication have been obtained and that the publication of the information by the EC and InnoBuyer does not infringe any rights of third parties.

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/managing-your-project/communicating-and-raising-eu-visibility_en

Upon a duly substantiated request by a selected Challenger or Solver, the InnoBuyer Consortium, 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.

9.4 FINANCIAL AUDITS AND CONTROLS

The European Commission (EC) will monitor that the InnoBuyer consortium partners, the selected Challengers and Solvers comply with the conditions for financial support to third parties such as set out in the InnoBuyer grant agreement and may take any action foreseen by the grant agreement in case of noncompliance vis à vis the selected Challengers and Solvers concerned.

Moreover, the EC may at any time during the implementation of the InnoBuyer project and up to 5 (five) years after the end of the InnoBuyer project, arrange for financial audits to be carried out, by external auditors, or by the EC services themselves including the European Anti-Fraud office (OLAF). The audit procedure shall be deemed to be initiated on the date of receipt of the relevant letter sent by the EC. Such audits may cover financial, systemic and other aspects (such as accounting and management principles) relating to the proper execution of the grant agreement. They shall be carried out on a confidential basis.

The selected applicants shall make available directly to the EC all detailed information and data that may be requested by the EC or any representative authorised by it, with a view to verifying that the grant agreement is properly managed and performed in accordance with its provisions and that costs have been charged in compliance with it. This information and data must be precise, complete and effective.

The selected applicants shall keep all deliverables and the originals or, in exceptional cases, duly authenticated copies – including electronic copies – of all documents relating to the Co-creation Agreement for up to five years from the end of the project. These shall be made available to the EC when requested during any audit under the grant agreement.

In order to carry out these audits, the selected Challengers and Solvers shall ensure that the EC's services and any external body(ies) authorised by it have on-the-spot access at all reasonable times, notably to the selected Challengers and Solvers' offices, to their computer data, to their accounting data and to all the information needed to carry out those audits, including information on individual salaries of persons involved in the project. They shall ensure that the information is readily available on the spot at the moment of the audit and, if so requested, that data be handed over in an appropriate form.

On the basis of the findings made during the financial audit, a provisional report shall be drawn up. It shall be sent by the EC or its authorised representative to the InnoBuyer Consortium or Challenger or Solver concerned, which may make observations thereon within one month of receiving it. The Commission may decide not to take into account observations conveyed or documents sent after that deadline.

The final report shall be sent to the InnoBuyer Consortium or Challenger or Solver concerned within two months of expiry of the aforesaid deadline. On the basis of the conclusions of the audit, the EC shall take all appropriate measures that it considers necessary, including the issuing of recovery orders regarding all or part of the payments made by it and the application of any applicable sanction.

The European Court of Auditors shall have the same rights as the EC, notably the right of access, for the purpose of checks and audits, without prejudice to its own rules.

In addition, the EC may carry out on-the-spot checks and inspections in accordance with Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/96 of 11 November 1996 concerning on-the-spot checks and inspections carried out by the Commission in order to protect the European Communities' financial interests against fraud and other irregularities.

9.5 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPR)

9.5.1 INNOBUYER CONSORTIUM

The InnoBuyer Consortium itself will not retain an equity stake in any applicant's organisation, nor will it retain any Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).

9.5.2 CHALLENGERS AND EIC SOLVERS

The conditions regarding the intellectual property rights of Challengers and Solvers will be defined in the pilot co-creation agreements. But in general, the following principles must be respected:

- o They must give each other the background identified as needed for implementing the pilot,
- o Each Solver will own the foreground it generates and also the foreground jointly generated with the Challenger in the context of the pilot co-creation and implementation. This is to ensure that Solvers can widely exploit the newly developed solutions commercially. In return, the Challenger can receive rights to use the results for internal use and licensing rights subject to certain conditions to be negotiated with the Solver.

9.5.3 ORIGINALITY OF THE PROPOSALS

It is required that proposals submitted are based on original situations of the applicants and that their foreseen developments (pilot co-creation) are free from third-party rights. InnoBuyer consortium is not obliged to verify the authenticity of the ownership of the foreseen products/ services. Any issues delivered from third-party claims that arise as a result of the sub-granted projects/pilots are the sole responsibility of the sub-grantees.

9.5.4 EVALUATORS

Each external evaluator will sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) before receiving access to the database of proposals in order to protect the intellectual property of the applicants. However, InnoBuyer and the European Commission may ask participants who have received funding to present their work as part of public relations and networking events in order to showcase the benefits of the InnoBuyer project.

9.6 LIABILITY

The InnoBuyer consortium and the European Commission cannot be held liable for any acts or omissions of the applicant in relation to the selected sub-granted project/pilot implemented by the subgrantees. The InnoBuyer consortium shall not be liable for any defaults of any products, processes or services created in the sub-granted project/pilot. Including, for instance, anomalies in the functioning or performance thereof. In case any damage is caused to a third party by the subgrantee, the subgrantee will assume full responsibility for the damage caused. In no way will the InnoBuyer Consortium be responsible for any damages caused by the subgrantee.

10 SELF-ASSESSMENT BEFORE SUBMISSION

1) Does your application fit with the open call? Check that your proposal(s) does indeed address the objectives of InnoBuyer Open Call for EIC Solvers.

2) Are you unsure about the eligibility of your application? Refer to Chapter 4, "Eligibility Criteria," for detailed guidelines. As an EIC company, we encourage you to conduct a self-assessment using the EIC Accelerator Data Hub available at <https://sme-datahub.eisma.eu/>. While the results from this assessment are not decisive, they provide valuable insights. For a definitive determination of your company's status as

an EIC beneficiary, we recommend providing the reference or grant agreement of the funding scheme you are currently benefiting from or have previously benefited from.

3) Budgetary limits. Check that you comply with any budgetary limits as expressed in chapter 3.3 "Financial support provided".

4) Is your application complete? Have you completed all mandatory questions?

5) Does your application fulfil the requested information? Proposals should be precise, and concise and must answer to requested information, which is designed to correspond to the applied evaluation. Omitting requested information will almost certainly lead to lower scores and possible rejection.

6) Have you maximise your chances? There will be strong competition. Therefore, edit your application tightly, and strengthen or eliminate weak points.

7) Have you submitted your application before the deadline? It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit your proposal. Failure of the proposal to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the message as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

8) Have you provided the necessary annexes? Annex 1: Proposal template.

9) Do you need further advice and support? You are strongly advised to communicate with the InnoBuyer consortium via online Q&A.

11 OTHER OPEN CALL DOCUMENTS

The InnoBuyer Call for Solvers will be supported by multiple types of documents.

Terms and conditions of the InnoBuyer Call for Solvers

- **Guidelines for Applicants**, this document.

Documents needed at the application stage (for all applicants)

- **Annex 1: Proposal template**

Documents needed at the contracting stage (only for selected applicants)

- **Annex 2: Declaration of Honour**, which declares that all conditions related to the Call for Solvers are accepted by the applicants' legal representatives.
- **Annex 3: Bank Account Information & Onboarding form**, which collects information on the applicants' bank account to where the InnoBuyer payments will be sent.

- o **Annex 4: SME declaration:** A self-assessment document confirming that the Solvers comply with the SME definition.

Co-creation Agreement template, which provides a template of the Co-creation agreement that the successful applicants will be requested to sign. Note that this document serves as a reference. The Co-creation Agreement that will be given to the winning applicants will be finalised during the contracting phase.

12 CONTACTS

InnoBuyer will provide information to the applicants via the [F6S blog](#), so that the information (question and answer) can be visible to all participants.

- o Apply via: <https://www.f6s.com/innobuyer-open-call-for-eic-solvers/apply>
- o F6S support team: support@f6s.com, for any issue concerning the F6S platform.
- o More info at: <https://innobuyer.eu/eic-solvers/>
- o For extraordinary communication needs, please use the Discussion page at F6S platform at: <https://www.f6s.com/innobuyer-call-for-solvers/discuss>.