

Copernicus Incubation Programme 2017
Call for Proposals
Questions and Answers

Question: I am interested in projects aimed at new ventures / start-ups.
Could you please let me know more about the Copernicus Incubation Programme 2017?

Answer: You can find all information on the Call for proposal on the Copernicus Incubation Programme on this webpage:
http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=9092&lang=en
The call for proposals details the objective of the call and Incubation Programme

Question: I have understood it is aimed at creating the new companies i.e.
"The beneficiary of this call will be in charge of organising a regular and open selection of the best start-ups in Europe that use Copernicus and which want to be incubated."
Do you think my company would have a chance to win the grant?

Answer: I am not allowed to express any opinion on the likely chances of a particular applicant to win the grant.
The eligibility and selection criteria are presented in the call for proposal.

Question: We are a regional authority unit and would like to send our application to the call No. 260/G/GRO/COPE/17/10039 (Copernicus Incubation Programme) but so far I didn't find information if we, as a regional authority, can do that.

Answer: Regional authorities are allowed to apply, provided they fulfil the eligibility criteria set out in the call for proposal, which you can find here:
http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=9092&lang=en

Question: I am a co-founder of a young start-up company. I was wondering how can I be kept informed about the institution who will win the Copernicus Incubator program just in case I would like to apply for being part of the Incubator program itself?

Answer: The winner of the Call should be announced publicly in the Summer 2017.
It will be announced on our website Copernicus.eu

Question: Are coaching services eligible as part of the 15% co-financing brought by the support programme to support the incubation of a start-up?

Answer: The call for proposal stipulates that:
"In kind contributions received by the start-up from the support programme (such as office spaces, coaching hours...) are not eligible costs (hence, they cannot be part of these 15%). (...) It should be noted however that the support programme is strongly encouraged to provide as much support to the start-up as possible, including in-kind support.

The start-up should spend the incubation support on activities directly related to the development of its business, in particular:

- Prototyping and research expenses
- Company set-up, insurance, license and permit fees
- Equipment and supplies, in particular IT (servers, cloud services, software licences....) and other technological expenses
- Office space
- Intellectual Property Rights related expenses
- Advertising, promotion, communication and visit to clients
- Website and email domain, analytics services,
- Accounting, consulting or legal expertise
- Borrowing costs
- Employee-related costs, including recruiting expenses."

Question:	I am interested in this call but would like to know if it is possible to organize a consortium to answer the call?
Answer:	It is not possible for a consortium to answer the call, only single organisations.
Question:	We plan to submit the project proposal as a consortium of three partners. Is it possible to provide us with a model co-beneficiary agreement in which our partners would also be included?
Answer:	We do not accept consortia, only single organisations. That being said, sub-contracting is possible, under the conditions explained in section 4.4 of the call.
Question:	Would you provide us with more details regarding the time frame of the project? When are we expected to start the first year of incubation?
Answer:	The timeframe is described in the call for proposal, page 7. Activities should start in July 2017. There will presumably be several months of preparation and logistics before the first incubation voucher is awarded, but this timing is for the applicant to decide. The constraints are explained in the call (in particular: an evaluation should take place every quarter for 3 years, 60 incubations to be concluded within the 48 months of the contract).
Question:	Section 4.6 of the call for proposals states that "The Commission may require the beneficiary to lodge a guarantee for grants exceeding 60 000 EUR". Do you expect this guarantee to be attached to the proposal or will the Commission ask for it at a later stage?
Answer:	If the Commission asks for it (which depends on a risk assessment), it will only be asked for at a later stage.
Question:	In our model, the start-ups will co-finance their incubation activities from their own resources (15 % of the costs). Is it possible to require co-financing from the start-ups or is it necessary to provide them with 100 % financing of the incubation costs (85 % from the grant and 15 % from the support programme)?
Answer:	The 15% should come from the support programme, not the start-up. That being said, the scheme can ask the start-up to contribute on top (but it will not be eligible as part of the 15%).
Question:	Section III of the Guide for Applicants states that the annexes of Part B must be submitted by "all applicants". In our case of one lead partner and two associating partners, are all the partners requested to submit all the forms separately? For example, are we requested to upload form B6 three times for each partner?
Answer:	We do not accept consortia, only single organisations, which solves this question.
Question:	Form B4 – Declaration of Honour: As a public body (semi-budgetary organisation with no private subject involved), are we supposed to fill in part 5 of this form?
Answer:	If you qualify as a Member State administration or local authority, then you are not supposed to fill in this part.

Question: I have just been informed about:
Copernicus Incubation Programme 260/G/GRO/COPE/17/10039 which is very interesting.
I have read that: All incubation applicants should:
- Be entrepreneurs, start-ups, SMEs or students (henceforth "start-ups") wishing to develop a business idea based on Copernicus data and services information products.
I do not know or understand about Copernicus data and services information products....
Could you give me more information about "Copernicus" please?

Answer: Thank you for your question. All information about Copernicus can be found on our website <http://copernicus.eu/>

Question: The startups that apply must have an endorsement by an incubator / accelerator? If yes, what do you mean with endorsement?

Answer: As indicated in the call for proposal, the start-up support programme should commit to integrate the start-up in its programme if the start-up is awarded a Copernicus incubation voucher. The start-up support programme should also commit to co-finance 15% of the eligible costs declared by the start-up.

Question: We can include the housing services offered to the startups in the global budget?

Answer: As indicated in the call for proposal, in kind contributions received by the start-up from the support programme (such as office spaces, coaching hours...) are not eligible costs (hence, they cannot be part of these 15%). We must however distinguish between two situations:
1. If the office space is offered by the support programme
2. If the support programme participates in the rent of the start-up with an outside entity
Only under 1 this is contribution in-kind and would not be eligible. Situation 2 is eligible.

Question: I understand that startups are a very early stage, correct?

Answer: Any start-up can apply to the Copernicus Incubation Programme. There is no minimum stage that the start-up needs to be at.

Question: The selection board must have in-depth knowledge of "Copernicus data and service information products" to make the selection?

Answer: The selection board must have the ability (through at least one of its members) to judge each of the selection criteria, including the first one (the start-up project must use Copernicus data and services information - 1/3 of the total score)

Question: Expecting a difficulty in attracting 20 startups a year since the program is very specific (only those who use data Copernicus), what if there are less than 20 startups?

Answer: The Commission expects the beneficiary to demonstrate that it can allocate 20 vouchers every year. If fewer vouchers are allocated in a given year, the payment from the Commission will be decreased accordingly. This aspect of the proposal will be assessed under the evaluation criteria 1 (impact) – see p20 of the call.

Question: State aid: is the grant provided (or a part of it) considered as state aid? Will the grants paid to start-ups, i.e. 50.000 EUR have to be registered as "de minimis" aid?

Answer: This is a call for an EU grant, not state aid. State aid is defined as an advantage in any form whatsoever conferred on a selective basis to undertakings by national public authorities, and therefore does not include EU grant.

Question: Point 4.4 of the Call that deals with subcontracting states that “only tasks that are not core business can be sub-contracted”. However, ensure EU-wide impact of the projects, we plan to incubate some of the start-ups in our incubator and others in our associated incubators throughout EU. Is it then possible to delegate part of the incubation (=core business) to third parties as stated in point 4.5 of the call? We will still be responsible for the whole selection and incubation process.

Answer: The core business of this call is to run the Copernicus Incubation Programme, i.e. the organisation of an open selection of start-ups. The incubation itself can be managed by any start-up support programmes which is willing to endorse the start-ups, and not necessarily the organiser of the call. In addition, as explained in part 2.1 of the call, it should be noted that "The organiser of the selection should ensure a fair treatment of all applications, with demonstrated actions to avoid potential conflicts of interests. If any member of the selection board has any stake in one applying start-up, s/he should be replaced by another person for this session of the selection board." Finally, please note that the organiser of the programme can use partners to increase awareness of the programme but that the selection should always remain open to all Incubators and Accelerators in Europe, and not be restricted to a network of partners of the organiser.

Question: What kind of evidence should be submitted in order to prove the support of our partners – third parties? Letter of Support /Letter of Intent or it might take also another form (email confirmation etc.)?

Answer:

- For the organisation of the Copernicus Incubation Programme (EUR 450,000): the applicant will remain in charge of 15% of the declared costs. If the applicants intends to receive co-financing from third parties, each third party should fill in the form B3 – available on the call application system).
- For the incubation vouchers (EUR 3,000,000): the Copernicus Incubation Programme is open to start-ups that are endorsed by a support programme which commits to co-finance 15% of the declared costs. The organiser of the Copernicus incubation programme should demonstrate that it is able to enforce this criteria.

Question: When you talk about the selection process that....”should always remain open to all Incubators and Accelerators in Europe, and not be restricted to a network of partners of the organiser”, you are meaning about a scouting process to find startups having possibility (main characteristics) to apply?

Answer: As explained in the call for proposal, the start-ups should apply in partnership with a support programme (an Incubator, an Accelerator...). All start-ups based in Europe and using Copernicus services can apply (to receive the 50k voucher). They can receive support from any support programme based in Europe, willing to incubate the start-up and co-finance 15% of the costs. Any support programme in Europe can thus launch a scouting process to identify promising start-ups and encourage them to apply to the Incubation Programme.

Question: According to the call text, when is written about the financial support to third parties (15%), is it intended that only a financial contribution (money) is eligible? Is it not possible to contribute with human resources effort dedicated to business support in order to contribute to this actin with hourly rate costs (salary sheet)?

Answer: As indicated in the call for proposal, in kind contributions received by the start-up from the support programme (such as office spaces, coaching hours...) are not eligible costs (hence, they cannot be part of these 15%). We must however distinguish between two situations:

1. If the office space/human resources are offered by the support programme
2. If the support programme contributes to paying a service for the start-up provided **by an outside entity** (rent of an office space, provision of consulting services...).

Only under 1 this is contribution in-kind and would not be eligible. Situation 2 is eligible.

Question:	Concerning the B1_B2 Incubation rev 2, on the first sheet – B.1 and B.2 Costs and Revenue, I think there may be an error on the cell M9 requested EU grant. Right now the calculation formula on this cell is =I22, which is 3.Total Eligible costs. I think the cell M9 should be =M10. If this is correct, will you review the B1_B2 and uploaded the reviewed B1_B2 excel to the Sygma?
Answer:	Indeed M9 should read as M10 (figures and formulas in the form B1-B2 are only indicative).
Question:	Cell M30 is informed NA, even if the contribution in-kind has been identified on the call as a possible way of co-financing (section 4.3 p. 11). Can you clarify this point?
Answer:	In kind contributions are not eligible.
Question:	As we have planned that the start-up support programmes involved on the project will co-finance the 15% of the vouchers to the start-ups incubated locally and as the start-up programmes are not yet knowing if they will have their local start-ups selected under the call to be launched, we do not have yet the co-financing form B3 for them. In this case, when the co-financing third party has not yet done the co-financing form B3, where can we identify the co-financing coming from the start up programmes to the 15% of the vouchers in the sheet B.1 and B.2 Costs and Revenue in order to cover the 100% Percentage of eligible costs % (Cell N29)?
Answer:	"Financial contributions from 3rd parties earmarked to the eligible costs" are to be indicated in cell M16.
Question:	As there is some open issues still on the call text and B1_B2, may I kindly request if any extension of deadline is foreseen?
Answer:	We do not consider that these issues affect the content and validity of the call for proposal. As a consequence, they do not justify an extension of deadline (which is still tomorrow at 17:00). We will however notify the members of the evaluation committee that the form B1-B2 included a small mistake.
Question:	Is the total EU grant 3 500 000€? And therefore with the 85% maximum EU contribution of the action, the total budget of the project can be 4 117 647€? Or is it the maximum budget of the project 3 500 000€ and the EU grant 85% of the maximum budget 3 500 000€ = 2 975 000€?
Answer:	The maximum EU financing is EUR 3.450.000, representing maximum 85% of the budget. There is no maximum for the total budget of the action.
Question:	Under the B1_B2, sheet B.1.2.c Other expenditure: third party financing is indicated on the Heading 1.2 (Heading 1.2 - Other expenditure and third party financing). Can the project finances third party actors to perform one part of the action? For example: organisation of a promotion event? Is there specific rules on this?
Answer:	Subcontracting is allowed under the conditions presented in section 4.4.
Question:	The contribution in kind from third parties are not eligible but in the same they have been identified as a possibility of one part of the co-financing (15%). How this will be claimed to be included in the financial reporting in order to request the 85% grant?
Answer:	In kind contributions are not eligible.
Question:	Apparently, the budget is set for 3 years (1.150.000 per year of which: 1M for the incubations; 150K for the communication/implementation), and we have a clear performance indicator for each year (20 incubations). However the implementation period is fixed on 4 years.
Answer:	Regarding the budget: The call covers the award of 20 incubation vouchers every year for three years: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EUR 1.000.000 for the 20 incubation per year (3.000.000 in total for 3 years) - EUR 150.000 for the organisation per year (450.000 in total).

Question:	So, assuming that the 150K are split in the 3 years to achieve 60 incubations, how to cover the 4th year? Shall we consider the 4th year as in-kind?
Answer:	Regarding the duration: an incubation voucher awarded in a given year might be implemented (in part or fully) during the year afterward. The implementation period is therefore of four years (to cover the implementation of the incubation vouchers awarded in the third year).
Question:	To what heading of cost the 1M (3M) will be assigned? Other direct cost or Financial Support to third parties?
Answer:	The type of costs eligible under the incubation is listed in part 2.1 page 5.