



COSME Programme

Call for Proposals

Training for SME-friendly policies in Central Purchasing Bodies (CPBs)

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises (henceforth called "SMEs") play a crucial role in reaching the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy¹. Whereas they are considered as crucial engines for growth and job creation, their competitiveness is affected by a limited exploitation of international opportunities and innovation prospects in the Single Market and beyond.

In this context, the Programme for the competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (2014-2020)², hereinafter referred to as "COSME", aims to promote growth and to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of enterprises in the European Union.

The Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises³ (hereinafter referred to as "EASME" or the "Agency") is entrusted by the European Commission with the implementation, *inter alia*, of parts of the COSME programme.

In this respect, this call for proposals, managed by EASME, implements parts of the COSME Work Programme 2019, as last amended on 20 August 2019⁴.

1.2. Policy Context

Public procurement represents 14% of the EU's GDP. In order to tackle the fiscal consolidation requirements, EU member states are increasingly recurring to the aggregation of demand via specialised bodies called Central Purchasing Bodies (henceforth called "CPBs"). These bodies operate at national, regional or sectorial level (e.g. in the health sector) and procure for the corresponding level of government.

CPBs are hence large scale buyers as they manage large calls (via framework agreements) used by all relevant public authorities to procure certain goods or services. However, aggregating demand may lead to larger volumes, and therefore CPBs may unintentionally reduce SMEs' access to public procurement markets. Against this backdrop it is regarded as essential that CPBs buying practices are more adapted to the particular needs of SMEs.

Furthermore, large procurement volumes of CPBs can impact SMEs in other policy areas on an EU, national and regional level (e.g. fostering the development of innovation).

A first training programme was funded by COSME work programme 2017⁵. The programme was highly successful in terms of applications received, quality of the training course, the feedback of participants, and Member States appreciation.

¹ COM (2010)2020 final of 3 March 2010 "Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth".

² Regulation (EU) No 1287/2013 of 11 December 2013 (Official Journal of the European Union L 347/33 of 20.12.2013).

³ EASME was set up by Commission Implementing Decision 2013/771/EU of 17 December 2013 establishing the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and repealing Decisions 2004/20/EC and 2007/372/EC (Official Journal of the European Union L 341/73 of 18.12.2013).

⁴ Commission Implementing Decision C(2019) 6039 amending and correcting Commission's Implementing Decision C(2018) 8098 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2019 and the financing for the implementation of the programme for the competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises.

⁵ Commission Implementing Decision C(2017) 4563 of 6.7.2017 amending Commission Implementing Decision C(2017) 1042 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2017 and the financing for the implementation of the programme for the competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises.

2. OBJECTIVE(S) – THEME(S) – ACTIVITIES – OUTPUTS

The purpose of this call is to conclude a Framework Partnership Agreements (FPA) for the period 2020-2022 with organisations to which specific grant agreements might be awarded in order to implement training courses.

Applications to this call for proposals must provide an “Implementation Strategy” covering the period 2020-2022. This document must define the broad strategic approach and explain how the specific objectives and operational requirements laid down in the present call will be addressed.

The document must be concise, precise and answer to the instructions in the best possible way.

The Implementation Strategy should be more a vision with the accent on impact. Applicants should specify in particular how they intend to implement the eligible actions as outlined below in point 2.3 during the period 2020 and 2022 (i.e. strategy and methodology).

After the signature of the FPA, the Agency may award specific grant agreements under the framework partnership for specific actions implementing the “Implementation Strategy”. Therefore, applicants having signed a FPA will be invited to submit a proposal with a detailed work programme. A first Specific Grant Agreement (SGA) might be awarded in 2020 to cover 18 months of implementation (2020-2022) and a second SGA might be awarded by the end of 2020 for a period of 14 months of implementation (2020-2022).

2.1. OBJECTIVES

The objective of the specific actions is to strengthen the capacity of personnel working for large public buyers (i.e. CPBs) to ensure SMEs' access to large public procurement markets, as well as to strengthen the capacity of SMEs to bid for large calls for tenders.

The centralisation of public procurement functions may affect the broader market, at a local, regional and European level. Training the personnel of CPBs to understand and manage public procurement rules, to design call for tenders and recognise the strategic role of public procurement is therefore imperative.

A training programme that seeks to strengthen the capacity of CPB personnel will focus on how to aggregate markets for public procurement. This training programme will help personnel to manage markets, and in particular, to assist with the inclusion of SMEs in public procurement competitions.

Moreover, CPBs are usually invited to actively contribute to achieving other policy objectives, such as environmental friendly purchase, supporting the re-introduction of workers currently excluded from the labour market, fostering the development of innovative products and services. Therefore, the training must also address issues such as green procurement, social procurement and innovative procurement.

2.2. THEMES AND PRIORITIES

The priority of the specific actions training programme will be on newly or to be established CPBs in the EU and/or COSME participating countries⁶, e.g. CPBs in countries whose procurement systems are structurally weak and/or new or to be established such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

2.3. TYPE OF SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

The scope of specific activities to be carried out by the successful applicants shall include:

⁶ The updated list of eligible third countries is available on the following webpage: <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/34263> .

2.3.1 Organisation and management of a training programme for staff working in CPBs, or in case these are not established, for staff with policy, regulatory or control functions in public procurement (in the EU Member States and/or COSME participating countries⁷).

The proposal has to describe the organisation and management of the training course. This includes the definition of the content and the duration of the training programme, the provision of the training material, and its overall management.

The targeted duration of the training programme should be between 5 weeks and 2 months, and can be split in two or more periods. Part of the training programme may be given online.

2.3.2 Selection of suitable trainers teaching CPB personnel

The trainers must come from academia and from one or more established CPBs operating at national level. Trainers must be fluent in English, as the training course will be provided in English. At least 55% of all training sessions must be provided by experienced staff working for CPBs.

2.3.3 Promotion and communication of the training programme

The proposal has to describe the promotion of the training programme towards personnel of CPBs. The target is to have at least 30-35 staff members participating in the training programme.

2.3.4 Selection of the participants in the training programme

Participants in the training programme must work in a CPB operational at national, regional, or sectorial level, or from newly established or to be established CPBs, or in case these are not established, for staff with policy, regulatory or control functions in public procurement. CPB may also be intended as a government department within a Ministry. Their application must be accompanied by a letter of support from their organisation. Overall, priority should be given to staff from countries with high numbers of newly or to be established CPBs such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. However, participation from staff from the other EU countries and COSME participating countries would still be possible.

2.3.5 Support for selected participants

The proposal must include a viable concept to support selected participants to attend the training sessions. This includes a dedicated budget line for the reimbursement of certain costs for the selected participants for the duration of the training. This may also comprise the reimbursement of some travel expenditures, accommodation and participants' fees.

2.3.6 Support to Alumni network

The proposal has to include the setup of an Alumni network among participants of the training course (including those of the first and second edition). The names and the contacts details of the alumni of the first edition will be provided by DG GROW to the successful applicant after the signature of the specific grant agreement.

2.3.7 Organisation of a conference

The proposal has to include an overview on the organisation of a conference at the end of the course where the cohort will meet with best practitioners in public procurement in the Union. The costs for the organisation, monitoring and supervising of the conference have to be covered by the grant. .

⁷ See list at footnote 5.

For this call for Framework Partnership Agreements (FPAs) the consortium must specify in their Implementation Strategy how these specific activities will be put in practice in case they are awarded Specific Grant Agreements (SGAs).

All the activities mentioned in the point 2.3. have to comply with the applicable data protection rules.

2.4. OUTPUT OR DELIVERABLES

The applicant must come up with a set of outputs and deliverables, which will facilitate the evaluation of the proposal. The following outputs and deliverables will have to be produced and targets need to be set in the proposal:

- Training sessions organised for CPB personnel, or in case these are not established, for staff with policy, regulatory or control functions in public procurement. CPB may also be intended as a government department within a Ministry. Participants from local and regional authorities would be eligible.
- Personnel of CPBs in EU Member States and COSME participating countries who completed the training programme and increased their knowledge and understanding of procurement.
- Establishment of a pool of highly skilled public procurement officials working in CPBs who have taken part in the programme.
- Development of a comprehensive and well-structured curriculum for a training programme targeting personnel of CPBs.
- A guide book describing the curriculum and how the training programme was organised, including all tools and sources used. The guide book must cover all learning modules, part of the developed curriculum.
- Dissemination and promotion strategy for the proposed training programme and the methodology to be developed.
- Setting up of an Alumni network including participants from both the first and the second edition of the training programme.

2.5. INDICATORS

The applicants need to set performance indicators, which will allow the evaluation and monitoring of the proposed action. In addition to the applicant's indicators, the proposal must include the following performance indicators:

- Total number of participants in the training courses
- Total number of organisations sending staff to the training course
- Number of countries included in the training course
- Level of satisfaction and feedback from participants of the training course

3. TIMETABLE

The deadline for submitting applications is **27/02/2020 at 17:00 h Brussels time.**

3.1 INDICATIVE TIMETABLE FOR THE SELECTION OF CONSORTIUM TO CONCLUDE THE FPA

<i>Stages</i>	<i>Indicative Dates</i>
Evaluation period*	March 2020
Information to applicants*	March 2020
Signature of FPA and entering into force *	March/April 2020

* *Indicative*

3.2 INDICATIVE TIMETABLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FIRST SPECIFIC GRANT AGREEMENTS (SGAs)

<i>Stages</i>	<i>Indicative Dates</i>
Deadline to submit proposals for specific actions by invited FPA awardees	April 2020
Evaluation period	April/ May2020
Information to applicants	May 2020
Signature of the SGAs	May 2020
Starting date of the action	June 2020

Depending on budget availability, another invitation to submit proposals for a second Specific Grant Agreement (SGA) (i.e. invitations for Consortium having signed the FPA) will be launched in 2020. The second SGA should start in 2020 with a duration of 14 months. The COSME WP 2020 will define the exact duration of the second SGA.

4. INDICATIVE BUDGET AVAILABLE AND FUNDING OF PROJECTS

As a result of this Call for proposals, EASME expects to select 1 (one) consortium in order to sign 1 (one) Framework Partnership Agreement and (two) Specific Grant Agreements in 2020.

The maximum grant amount per Specific Grant Agreement resulting from the first consultation for SGAs will be EUR 400.000,00. The amount for the 2nd Specific Grant Agreement to be signed in 2020 is subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the COSME WP 2020 after the adoption of the EU budget for 2020 by the budgetary authority or provided for in the provisional twelfths.

The grant is limited to a maximum reimbursement rate of **90 % of eligible costs.**

EASME reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available.

5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The following requirements must be complied with:

- Applications must be submitted no later than the deadline for submitting applications referred to in section 3;
- Applications must be submitted in writing, using the electronic system;
- Applications must be drafted in one of the EU official languages.

Failure to comply with those requirements will lead to the rejection of the application.

Incomplete applications may be considered inadmissible. This refers to the requested administrative data, the proposal description and requested grant amount, and any supporting documents specified in this call for proposals.

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

6.1. Eligible applicants

The following types of organisation are eligible:

- Central Purchasing Bodies (CPBs)⁸ operating at national level. CPBs are defined under Article 2(16) of Directive 2014/24/EU⁹;
- International organisations with a specific mission in the field of public procurement;
- Universities or educational institutions operating in the field of training of public procurement.

Applicants must be legal entities. In order to assess the applicants' eligibility, EASME will request supporting documents from applicants at the submission stage.

Linked third parties, to the applicants are not eligible to receive funding under this Call for proposals. They may take part in the action as linked third parties at their own costs only¹⁰.

Only applications from legal entities established in the following countries are eligible:

- EU Member States;
- Countries participating in the COSME programme¹¹ pursuant to Article 6 of the COSME Regulation¹².

⁸ Central Purchasing Bodies operate at national, regional or sectorial level (e.g. in the health sector) and procure for the corresponding level of government. CPBs can be public bodies (Procurement Agencies operating under the responsibility of a Ministry, department within the central government, State office, etc.) or (limited, non-profit, public, etc) company owned by the State / Ministry. Companies acting as CPBs, which are not state-owned are not eligible.

⁹ Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on public procurement and repealing Directive 2014/18/EC (OJ L 94/95 of 29 March 2014).

¹⁰ In accordance with Article 187 FR, entities that satisfy the eligibility criteria and that do not fall within one of the situations referred to in Articles 136(1) and 141(1) FR and that have a link with the applicant, in particular a legal or capital link, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation, will be considered as entities affiliated to the applicant.

¹¹ For more information on countries associated to the COSME programmes see: <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/21365>

¹² The following groups of countries are eligible for participation in COSME according to Article 6 COSME Regulation:

a. European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries which are members of the European Economic Area (EEA), in accordance with the conditions laid down in the EEA Agreement, and other European countries when agreements and procedures so allow;

6.2. Eligible consortia

Applicants must form a consortium of at least two organisations. The consortium must include at least one university or educational institution and an established Central Purchasing Body operating at national level.

Eligible consortium must be composed of organisations defined as eligible applicants (see section 6.1. above). Organisations do not have to come from different eligible countries.

6.3. For British applicants

Please be aware that eligibility criteria must be complied with for the entire duration of the grant. If the United Kingdom withdraws from the EU during the grant period without concluding an agreement with the EU ensuring in particular that British applicants continue to be eligible, you will cease to receive EU funding (while continuing, where possible, to participate) or be required to leave the project based on Articles 39.3 and Article 6 FPA.

7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

7.1. Exclusion

The authorising officer shall exclude an applicant from participating in call for proposals procedures where:

- (a) the applicant is bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures, its assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court, it is in an arrangement with creditors, its business activities are suspended, or it is in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under EU or national laws or regulations;
- (b) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the applicable law;
- (c) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is guilty of grave professional misconduct by having violated applicable laws or regulations or ethical standards of the profession to which the applicant belongs, or by having engaged in any wrongful intent or gross negligence, including, in particular, any of the following:
 - (i) fraudulently or negligently misrepresenting information required for the verification of the absence of grounds for exclusion or the fulfilment of eligibility or selection criteria or in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision;
 - (ii) entering into agreement with other applicants with the aim of distorting competition;
 - (iii) violating intellectual property rights;
 - (iv) attempting to influence the decision-making process of the [Commission] [Agency] during the award procedure;
 - (v) attempting to obtain confidential information that may confer upon it undue advantages in the award procedure;
- (d) it has been established by a final judgment that the applicant is guilty of any of the following:

b. acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates in accordance with the general principles and general terms and conditions for the participation of those countries in the Union's programmes established in the respective Framework Agreements and Association Council Decisions, or similar arrangements;

c. countries falling within the scope of the European neighbourhood policies, when agreements and procedures so allow and in accordance with the general principles and general terms and conditions for the participation of those countries in the Union's programmes established in the respective Framework Agreements, Protocols to Association Agreements and Association Council Decisions.

The updated list of eligible third countries is available on the following webpage: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme/index_en.htm. Proposals from applicants in Article 6 countries may be selected provided that, on the date of award, agreements have been signed setting out the arrangements for the participation of those countries in the programme.

- (i) fraud, within the meaning of Article 3 of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Article 1 of the Convention on the protection of the European Communities' financial interests, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 July 1995;
 - (ii) corruption, as defined in Article 4(2) of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 or Article 3 of the Convention on the fight against corruption involving officials of the European Communities or officials of Member States of the European Union, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 May 1997, or conduct referred to in Article 2(1) of Council Framework Decision 2003/568/JHA, or corruption as defined in the applicable law;
 - (iii) conduct related to a criminal organisation, as referred to in Article 2 of Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA;
 - (iv) money laundering or terrorist financing within the meaning of Article 1(3), (4) and (5) of Directive (EU) 2015/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council;
 - (v) terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities, as defined in Articles 1 and 3 of Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA, respectively, or inciting, aiding, abetting or attempting to commit such offences, as referred to in Article 4 of that Decision;
 - (vi) child labour or other offences concerning trafficking in human beings as referred to in Article 2 of Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council;
- (e) the applicant has shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision financed by the Union's budget, which has led to its early termination or to the application of liquidated damages or other contractual penalties, or which has been discovered following checks, audits or investigations by an authorising officer, OLAF or the Court of Auditors;
- (f) it has been established by a final judgment or final administrative decision that the applicant has committed an irregularity within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95;
- (g) It has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that the applicant has created an entity in a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or any other legal obligations of mandatory application in the jurisdiction of its registered office, central administration or principal place of business;
- (h) it has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that an entity has been created with the intent referred to in point (g);
- (i) for the situations referred to in points (c) to (h) above, the applicant is subject to:
- (i) facts established in the context of audits or investigations carried out by European Public Prosecutor's Office after its establishment, the Court of Auditors, the European Anti-Fraud Office or the internal auditor, or any other check, audit or control performed under the responsibility of an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body;
 - (ii) non-final judgments or non-final administrative decisions which may include disciplinary measures taken by the competent supervisory body responsible for the verification of the application of standards of professional ethics;
 - (iii) facts referred to in decisions of persons or entities being entrusted with EU budget implementation tasks;
 - (iv) information transmitted by Member States implementing Union funds;
 - (v) decisions of the Commission relating to the infringement of Union competition law or of a national competent authority relating to the infringement of Union or national competition law; or
 - (vi) decisions of exclusion by an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body.

7.2. Remedial measures

If an applicant declares one of the situations of exclusion listed above (see section 7.4), it should indicate the measures it has taken to remedy the exclusion situation, thus demonstrating its reliability. This may include e.g. technical, organisational and personnel measures to prevent further occurrence, compensation of damage or payment of fines. The relevant documentary evidence which illustrates the remedial measures taken must be provided in annex to the declaration. This does not apply for situations referred in point (d) of section 7.1 .

7.3. Rejection from the call for proposals

The authorising officer shall not award a grant to an applicant who:

- a. is in an exclusion situation established in accordance with section 7.1; or
- b. has misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or has failed to supply that information; or
- c. was previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equal treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise.

The same exclusion criteria apply to linked third parties.

Administrative sanctions (exclusion) may be imposed on applicants or linked third parties where applicable, if any of the declarations or information provided as a condition for participating in this procedure prove to be false.

7.4. Supporting documents

Applicants and linked parties if applicable must provide a **declaration on their honour** certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in Articles 136(1) and 141 of the EU Financial Regulation, by filling in the relevant form attached to the application form accompanying this call for proposals.

It is not necessary to submit a declaration of honour in the electronic submission tool (SEP) in the Participants Portal. All partners of projects recommended for funding will be required to submit such declarations at a later stage (during the preparation of the specific grant agreement).

However, at the time of submission the coordinator will be requested to confirm, in the electronic submission tool, that none of the partners is in a situation as described in section 7 of this call.

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

8.1 Financial capacity

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the duration of the grant and to participate in its funding. The applicants' financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the following supporting documents:

a) Low value grants (\leq EUR 60 000):

- a declaration on their honour.

b) Grants \geq EUR 60 000:

- a declaration on their honour and,

EITHER

the profit and loss account, the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts were closed;

- for newly created entities, the business plan might replace the above documents.

OR

- the table provided for in the application form, filled in with the relevant statutory accounting figures, in order to calculate the ratios as detailed in the form.

c) Grants for an action \geq EUR 750 000: not applicable.

In the event of an application grouping several applicants (consortium), the above thresholds apply to each applicants.

The above-listed documents will have to be provided at later stage, via the electronic submission tool and only upon request of EASME.

On the basis of the documents submitted, if the authorising officer considers that financial capacity is weak, s/he may:

- request further information;
- decide not to give pre-financing
- decide to give pre-financing paid in instalments;
- decide to give pre-financing covered by a bank guarantee (see section 12.4 below);
- where applicable, require the joint and several financial liability of all the co-beneficiaries¹³;

If the Authorising Officer considers that the financial capacity is insufficient, s/he will reject the application.

8.2 Operational capacity

Applicants must have the professional competencies necessary to complete the proposed strategy.

In this respect, applicants have to fill in the specific sections of the Technical annex 1 concerning:

- List of participants, including previous experience in the activities of the call and short description of the technical equipment, tools or facilities and patents at the disposal of each in relation to the call.

The consortium must demonstrate that overall they can provide all the activities described in section 2.3 of this call.

- Operational/Technical Capacity: Skills, expertise and role of key staff (max 3 per organisation) indicating the persons that will compose the core team responsible for the Implementation Strategy with their qualifications and competences, role in the project and time allocation to the project.

At least one member of the consortium must have experience of at least 5 years with regard to centralisation of public procurement.

- Relevance of the Consortium's architecture, expertise and experience Indicating how previous experience and expertise would be beneficial for the implementation of the call's activities. It should

¹³ The beneficiaries are advised to provide for this situation also in the consortium agreement (see Article 4.2 of the FPA).

inter alia include information on the applicants' activities in the field of organisation and management of trainings and centralisation of public procurement.

9. AWARD CRITERIA

Eligible applications will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

Criteria	Max. score
<p>Relevance (<i>meeting objectives of the call; appropriate results; appropriate partnership</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How relevant is the proposal in relation to the objectives of the call? ▪ How strategically chosen are the consortium partners (relevance of the partners to the project)? 	35
<p>Quality of the proposed actions (<i>clear and feasible description of actions; appropriate allocation of resources, including management</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How clear, coherent and ambitious is the proposed methodology in the Implementation Strategy in order to cover the call requirements regarding Objective(s) – Theme(s) –section 2.1 and 2.2 of the call. ▪ How suitable are the provisions to ensure the quality of the project management and the control measures, including the measures to ensure continuity of the service and adherence to deadlines in case of absence of a team member and management of other risks. The quality system should be specific to the tasks. ▪ How appropriate is the organisational structure and decision-making mechanisms with regard to the scale of the project? 	40
<p>Impact on target audience (<i>appropriate impact indicators; dissemination; project continuation</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the proposal suggesting clear, realistic and practical impact indicators? To what extent does the project contribute to creating a real, measurable impact (including the number of proposed participants in the training programme)? ▪ How effective, innovative and convincing are the promotional and communication activities? Does the proposal contain a comprehensive communication strategy (including number of activities planned to promote the action)? 	25
TOTAL	100

In order to be considered for award of a Framework Partnership Agreement, proposal needs to pass an overall threshold of 70% in terms of the total score. In addition, thresholds of **50%** will be applied to **each individual award criterion** described above, in order to ensure a consistent minimum quality for all award criteria. Proposals will be ranked according to their total score.

10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

EASME will sign with the successful consortium an FPA covering the whole implementing period (2019-2021). It will lay down the general rules applicable to the cooperation between EASME and the consortium (European Partnership - EP) and will include in an annex the Implementation Strategy. The FPA does not constitute an obligation for EASME to award specific grant agreements to the FPA awardee. The signature of the FPA entitles the consortium to submit a work programme for specific grant agreements of limited duration upon invitation by EASME.

EASME may award specific grant agreements for specific actions to be implemented under the FPA. Following the signature of the FPAs, the consortium will be invited to submit a detailed work programme covering the specific activities of the first year of FPA implementation.

This work programme is intended to translate in specific actions the above-mentioned Implementation Strategy of the FPA. Invitation to submit proposals for Specific Grant Agreement will be restricted to consortia having signed a FPA.

The approved work programme and budget will be annexed to a Specific Grant Agreement (SGA) that will be concluded with the consortium having submitted the best-ranked proposal, considering the availability of budget appropriations.

Depending on budget availability, EASME may invite the consortium having signed a FPA to submit detailed work programmes for other periods of implementation.

11. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PROCEDURES

Unsuccessful applicants may request the review of the admissibility and eligibility procedure and the evaluation procedure with regard to their proposal.

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

12. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

To provide full transparency to the applicants, this section presents the financial provisions governing the award of specific grant agreements under the Framework Partnership Agreements awarded following this call for proposals.

12.1 General principles

a) Non-cumulative award

An action may only receive one grant from the EU budget.

In no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the Union budget. To ensure this, applicants shall indicate the sources and amounts of Union funding received or applied for the same action or part of the action or for its functioning during the same financial year as well as any other funding received or applied for the same action.

b) Non-retroactivity

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed.

A grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun only where the applicant can demonstrate the need to start the action before the grant agreement is signed.

In such cases, costs eligible for financing may not have been incurred prior to the date of submission of the grant application

c) Co-financing

Co-financing means that the applicant must ensure that the resources which are necessary to carry out the action may not be entirely provided by the EU grant. Co-financing may take the form of:

- the beneficiary's own resources;
- income generated by the action;
- financial contributions from third parties.

d) Balanced budget

The estimated budget of the action has to be attached to the application form. It must have revenue and expenditure in balance.

The budget must be drawn up in euros.

Applicants for whom costs will not be incurred in euros, should use the exchange rate published on the Info-euro website available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm.

e) Implementation contracts/subcontracting

Where the implementation of the action requires the award of procurement contracts (implementation contracts), the beneficiary must award the contract to the bid offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interests and retain the documentation for the event of an audit.

In the event of procurement exceeding EUR 60 000, the beneficiary must abide by special rules as referred in the grant agreement annexed to the call. Moreover the beneficiary is expected to clearly document the tendering procedure and retain the documentation for a possible audit.

Entities acting in their capacity of contracting authorities in the meaning of Directive 2014/24/EU¹⁴ or contracting entities in the meaning of Directive 2014/25/EU¹⁵ must comply with the applicable national public procurement rules. The beneficiary is expected to clearly document the tendering procedure and retain the documentation for the event of an audit.

Beneficiaries may sub-contracting, i tasks forming part of the action as described in the proposal. If they do so, they must ensure that, in addition to the above-mentioned conditions of best value for money or if appropriate, the lowest price and absence of conflicts of interests, the following conditions are also complied with: (i) subcontracting may cover only a limited part of the specific action;

(ii) recourse to subcontracting is justified because of the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;

¹⁴ Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 26 February 2014 on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC (OJ L 94/65 of 28.3.2014).

¹⁵ Directive 2014/25/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on procurement by entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors and repealing Directive 2004/17/EC (OJ L 94/243 of 28.3.2014).

- (iii) the estimated costs of the subcontracting are clearly identifiable in the estimated budget;
- (iv) any recourse to subcontracting, if not provided for in description of the action, is communicated by the beneficiary and approved by the Agency. The Agency may grant approval:
 - (i) before any recourse to subcontracting, if the beneficiaries requests an amendment,
 - (ii) after recourse to subcontracting if the subcontracting:
 - is specifically justified in the interim or final technical report and
 - does not entail changes to the specific grant agreement which would call into question the decision awarding the grant or be contrary to the equal treatment of applicants;
- (v) the beneficiaries ensure that certain conditions applicable to beneficiaries, enumerated in the grant agreement (e.g. visibility, confidentiality, etc.), are also applicable to the subcontractors.

f) Financial support to third parties.

Applications may not envisage provision of financial support to third parties.

12.2 Funding forms

Grants are calculated on the basis of a detailed estimated budget indicating clearly the costs that are eligible for EU funding. The grant amount may neither exceed the eligible costs nor the amount requested. Amounts are indicated in euros.

➤ **Maximum EU contribution requested**

The EU contribution is limited to a maximum co-financing rate of eligible costs indicated in section 4. Consequently, part of the total eligible expenses entered in the estimative budget must be financed from sources other than the EU grant (see section 12.1c).

➤ **Eligible costs**

'Eligible costs' shall meet all the following criteria:

- ✓ they are incurred by the beneficiary;
- ✓ they are incurred during the duration of the action, with the exception of costs relating to final reports and audit certificates;

The period of eligibility of costs will start as specified in the grant agreement. If a beneficiary can demonstrate the need to start the action before the agreement is signed, expenditure may be authorised before the grant is awarded. Under no circumstances can the eligibility period start before the date of submission of the grant application (see section 12.1 b).

- ✓ they are indicated in the estimated budget of the action;
- ✓ they are necessary for the implementation of the action which is the subject of the grant;
- ✓ they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary;

- ✓ they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- ✓ they are reasonable, justified, and comply with the requirements of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

The beneficiary's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the costs and revenue declared in respect of the action/project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

The same criteria apply to costs incurred by linked third parties.

In addition for **unit costs**:

- ✓ the number of actual units must comply with the following conditions:
 - the units must be actually used or produced during the duration of the action;
 - the units must be necessary for implementing the action or produced by it, and
 - the number of units must be identifiable and verifiable, in particular supported by records and documentation.

Further details are included in the model of the specific grant agreement.

Eligible costs may be direct or indirect.

Eligible direct costs

The eligible direct costs for the action are those costs which, with due regard for the conditions of eligibility set out above, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the action and which can therefore be booked to it directly, such as :

A. Direct personnel costs

Types of eligible personnel costs

A.1 Personnel costs are eligible if they are related to personnel working for the beneficiary under an employment contract (or equivalent appointing act) and assigned to the action ('**costs for employees (or equivalent)**'). They must be limited to salaries (including during parental leave), social security contributions, taxes and other costs included in the **remuneration**, if they arise from national law or the employment contract (or equivalent appointing act).

They may also include **additional remuneration** for personnel assigned to the action (including payments on the basis of supplementary contracts regardless of their nature), if:

- (a) it is part of the beneficiary's usual remuneration practices and is paid in a consistent manner whenever the same kind of work or expertise is required;
- (b) the criteria used to calculate the supplementary payments are objective and generally applied by the beneficiary, regardless of the source of funding used.

A.2 The **costs for natural persons working under a direct contract** with the beneficiary other than an employment contract or **seconded by a third party against payment** are eligible personnel costs, if:

- (a) the person works under conditions similar to those of an employee (in particular regarding the way the work is organised, the tasks that are performed and the premises where they are performed);
- (b) the result of the work carried out belongs to the beneficiary, and
- (c) the costs are not significantly different from those for personnel performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the beneficiary.

The costs of the personnel of **national administrations** are eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned were not undertaken.

A.3 Costs of owners of beneficiaries that are **small and medium-sized enterprises** ('SME owners'), who are working on the action and who do not receive a salary are eligible personnel costs, if they correspond to the amount per unit set out in Annex 2a of the model grant agreement multiplied by the number of actual hours worked on the action.¹⁶

Further details of the calculation of personal costs included in the model of the specific grant agreement.

B. Direct costs of subcontracting (including related duties, taxes and charges, such as non-deductible value added tax (VAT) paid by beneficiaries that are not public bodies acting as public authority) are eligible if the conditions set out in the specific grant agreement are met.

C. Other direct costs

C.1 Travel costs and related subsistence allowances (including related duties, taxes and charges, such as non-deductible value added tax (VAT) paid by beneficiaries that are not public bodies acting as public authority) are eligible if they are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices on travel.

C.2 The depreciation costs of equipment, infrastructure or other assets (new or second-hand) as recorded in the beneficiary's accounts are eligible, if they were purchased in accordance with the conditions set out in the grant agreement and written off in accordance with international accounting standards and the beneficiary's usual accounting practices.

The **costs of renting or leasing** equipment, infrastructure or other assets (including related duties, taxes and charges, such as non-deductible value added tax (VAT) paid by beneficiaries that are not public bodies acting as public authority) are also eligible, if they do not exceed the depreciation costs of similar equipment, infrastructure or assets and do not include any financing fees.

The only portion of the costs that will be taken into account is that which corresponds to the duration of the action and rate of actual use for the purposes of the action.

C.3 Costs of other goods and services (including related duties, taxes and charges, such as non-deductible value added tax (VAT) paid by beneficiaries that are not public bodies acting as public authority) are eligible, if they are purchased specifically for the action and in accordance with the conditions set out in the grant agreement.

Such goods and services include, for instance, consumables and supplies, dissemination, protection of results, certificates on the financial statements (if they are required by the Agreement), translations and publications.

D. Eligible indirect costs (overheads)

Indirect costs are costs that are not directly linked to the action implementation and therefore cannot be attributed directly to it.

Indirect costs are eligible if they are declared on the basis of the flat-rate of 7% of the eligible direct costs.

Indirect costs may not include costs entered under another budget heading.

¹⁶ For the unit cost for SME owners natural beneficiaries without salary see annex 2a of the multi beneficiary grant agreement for COSME EMFF : https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/other_eu_prog/emff/mga/emff-mga-multi_en.pdf

Applicants's attention is drawn to the fact that in the case of beneficiaries receiving an operating grant¹⁷ financed by the EU or Euratom budget, they cannot declare indirect costs for the period covered by the operating grant unless they can demonstrate that the operating grant does not cover any costs of the action.

➤ **Ineligible costs**

- (a) costs related to return on capital;
- (b) debt and debt service charges;
- (c) provisions for future losses or debts ;
- (d) interest owed;
- (e) doubtful debts;
- (f) currency exchange losses;
- (g) bank costs charged by the beneficiary's bank for transfers from the Agency;
- (h) excessive or reckless expenditure;
- (i) deductible VAT;
- (j) costs incurred during suspension of the implementation of the action;
- (k) in-kind contributions provided by third parties;
- (l) costs declared under another EU or Euratom grant (including grants awarded by a Member State and financed by the EU or Euratom budget and grants awarded by bodies other than the Agency for the purpose of implementing the EU or Euratom budget); in particular, indirect costs if the beneficiary is already receiving an operating grant financed by the EU or Euratom budget in the same period, unless they can demonstrate that the operating grant does not cover any costs of the action.;
- (m) costs for staff of a national (or local) administration, for activities that are part of the administration's normal activities (i.e. not undertaken only because of the grant);
- (n) costs (especially travel and subsistence costs) for staff or representatives of EU institutions, bodies or agencies.

Further details are included in the model of the specific grant agreement.

➤ **Calculation of the final grant amount**

The final amount of the grant to be awarded to the beneficiary is established after completion of the specific action, upon approval of the request for payment containing the following documents:

- ✓ a final report providing details of the implementation and results of the action;
- ✓ the final financial statement must detail all eligible costs (actual costs, unit costs and flat-rate costs);
- ✓ a certificate on the financial statements of the action for each beneficiary or linked third party, if
 - it requests an EU contribution of EUR 325 000 or more as reimbursement of actual costs and
 - the maximum EU contribution indicated, for that beneficiary or linked third party in the estimated budget (see Annex 2) as reimbursement of actual costs is EUR 750 000 or more.

In the event of non-execution or clearly inadequate execution of an activity planned in the work programme annexed to the grant agreement, the final grant will be reduced accordingly.

EU grants may not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit within the framework of the action. **Profit shall be defined as a surplus of the receipts over the eligible costs incurred by the beneficiary**, when the request is made for payment of the balance. In this respect, where a profit is made, the EASME shall be entitled to recover the percentage of the profit corresponding to the Union contribution to the eligible costs actually incurred by the beneficiary to carry out the action.

¹⁷ For the definition, see Article 121(1)(b) of Regulation 2015/1929 of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 (OJ L 218, 26.10.2012, p.1): '**operating grant**' means direct financial contribution, by way of donation, from the budget in order to finance the functioning of a body which pursues an aim of general EU interest or has an objective forming part of and supporting an EU policy.

Further details are included in the model of the framework partnership agreement and the specific grant agreement.

12.3 Payment arrangements:

Pre-financing payment

A **pre-financing payment** corresponding to **70% of the grant amount** will be transferred to the beneficiary within 30 days of the date when the last of the two parties signs the specific agreement, provided all requested guarantees have been received, if necessary.

Final payment

EASME will establish the amount of the **final payment** to be made to the beneficiary on the basis of the calculation of the final grant amount (see section 12.2 above). If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, the beneficiary will be required to reimburse the amount paid in excess by EASME through a recovery order.

12.4 Pre-financing guarantee

In the event that the applicant's financial capacity is not satisfactory, a pre-financing guarantee for an amount not exceeding the amount of the pre-financing and shall be valid for a period sufficiently long to allow it to be activated may be requested in order to limit the financial risks linked to the pre-financing payment.

The financial guarantee, in euro, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the Member State of the European Union. When the beneficiary is established in a third country, the authorising officer may agree that a bank or financial institution established in that third country may provide the guarantee if he considers that the bank or financial institution offers equivalent security and characteristics as those offered by a bank or financial institution established in a Member State. Amounts blocked in bank accounts shall not be accepted as financial guarantees.

The guarantee may be replaced by a joint and several guarantee by a third party or by a joint guarantee of the beneficiaries of an action who are parties to the same grant agreement

The guarantee shall be released when the pre-financing is deducted from interim payments or payments of the balances to the beneficiary, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.

Further details are included in the grant agreement.

13. PUBLICITY

13.1 By the beneficiaries

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used.

In this respect, beneficiaries are required to give prominence to the name and emblem of the European Commission on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised under the co-financed project.

To do this they must use the text, the emblem and the disclaimer in accordance with the details provided in the grant agreement.

If this requirement is not fully complied with, the beneficiary's grant may be reduced in accordance with the provisions of the grant agreement.

In addition to the text and logo relevant to the EU programme, the authorising officer will provide beneficiaries with a disclaimer stating that the EU is not responsible for the views displayed in the publications and/or in conjunction with the activities for which the grant is used.

13.2 By EASME

With the exception of scholarships paid to natural persons and other direct support paid to natural persons in most need, all information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year shall be published on an internet site of the European Union institutions no later than the 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded.

EASME will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary
- address of the beneficiary when the latter is a legal person, region when the beneficiary is a natural person, as defined on NUTS 2 level¹⁸ if he/she is domiciled within EU or equivalent if domiciled outside EU,
- subject of the grant,
- amount awarded.

Upon a reasoned and duly substantiated request by the beneficiary, the publication shall be waived if such disclosure risks threatening the rights and freedoms of individuals concerned as protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union or harm the commercial interests of the beneficiaries.

14. DATA PROTECTION

The reply to any call for proposals involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data¹⁹. Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested that are required to evaluate the application in accordance with the specifications of the call for proposals will be processed solely for that purpose by the Head of Unit A.1 of the EASME. Details concerning the processing of personal data are available on the privacy statement at: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/support/legal_notice/h2020-ssps-grants_en.pdf.

Personal data may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in Articles 136 and 141 of the EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046²⁰ (for more information see the Privacy Statement on: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/library/explained/management/protecting/privacy_statement_edes_en.pdf).

15. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the requirements of section 5 and by the deadline specified under section 3.

¹⁸ Commission Regulation (EC) No 105/2007 of 1 February 2007 amending the annexes to Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS) (Official Journal of the European Union L 39 of 10.02.2007).

¹⁹ OJ L 295/39 of 21.11.2018, repealing Regulation (EC) 45/2001 as of 11/12/2018.

²⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018R1046>

➤ **Electronic submission**

Applicants are requested to go to <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/cosme/cos-tsmfriend-fpa-2019-2-02-training-sme-friendly-policies-central-purchasing-bodies> and follow the procedure for submitting an application.

No modification to the application is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects or for the correction of clerical mistakes, the EASME may contact the applicant for this purpose during the evaluation process.

Applicants will be informed in writing about the results of the selection process.

➤ **Contacts**

EASME is available to answer questions relating to the content of the present call for proposals. All questions must be sent by e-mail to EASME-COSME-TSMFRIEND@ec.europa.eu;

Answers will be published at <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/cosme>

16. ANNEXES:

- Implementation strategy template (Technical Annex 1)
- COSME model FPA (Framework partnership agreement)
- COSME model SGA (Specific grant agreement)