



start **at** best

Workplace Innovation for Business Competitiveness

CALL FOR FUNDING PROPOSALS

Open procedure N° 20200302/EU

CALL GUIDELINES



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Table of Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	3
1.1	Introduction to Start at Best Open Calls for Proposals	3
1.2	Background Information and Context.....	3
2.	OBJECTIVES / THEMES / PRIORITIES	7
2.1	Call for Proposals objectives	8
3.	TIMETABLE.....	8
4.	BUDGET	9
4.1	Payment arrangements.....	9
5.	PROCEDURES.....	9
6.	ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS	9
6.1.	Eligible applicants	9
6.2.	Eligible project applications	10
6.3.	Financial capacity	10
6.4.	Exclusion from participation	10
7.	EVALUATION CRITERIA	10
7.1.	Eligible activities	10
7.2.	Scoring	12
8.	AWARD CRITERIA	13
9.	REPORTING	13
10.	LEGAL COMMITMENTS	14
11.	PUBLICITY	14
11.1.	By the beneficiaries	14
11.2.	By the Network and/or the Commission	14
11.3	Communication and Dissemination.....	15
12.	DATA PROTECTION.....	15
13.	PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS	16
13.1	Publication	16
13.2	Submission of the call for funding proposals application.....	16
13.3	Evaluation procedure	17
13.4	Award decision	17
13.5	Contacts	17
13.6	Annexes	18

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction to Start at Best Open Calls for Proposals

The Startup Europe Regions Network (henceforth “the Network”) as beneficiary of the European Commission (henceforth “the Commission”) under the European Union’s H2020 INNOSUP programme – project Start at Best (Grant agreement N. 860318) is launching a **call for funding proposals to encourage new approaches to workplace innovation** in SME environments which will ultimately drive the business competitiveness of the company itself.

The Start at Best Call for Funding Proposals across the EU is being led by the Start at Best Consortium. The Calls include:

- One pan-European call, open to applicants from all EU countries
- Three individual calls across each of the following EU member states – Italy; Ireland and Portugal - open to companies registered in each member state.

1.2 Background Information and Context

G.K. Chesterton¹ once said, “*there are companies so big they make us feel small, but the real big companies are the ones that make us feel big!*”

In recent years, startups and an increasing number of SMEs have played a pivotal role in influencing the “*office (or workplace) culture*”. Until recently, the term office conjured up a similar, quintessential image of cubicles, closed-door offices and restricted office space. With new ways of working, office space is being increasingly designed in new and innovative ways and organisation models have become more lean, flexible and engaged. Most offices have more than one break room and game rooms are not uncommon. Workplace innovation also means a new fresh approach to ‘flexible working practices, which startups, SMEs and a number of large corporates, MNCs have taken to a whole new level.

Another major workplace innovation is activity-based working (ABW), a workplace strategy where employees are given the choice between several different types of work areas that are designated for specific activities. Rather than being assigned to an individual workstation, employees in an activity-based working environment have access to various spaces where they can work in a quiet area without distraction, meet with a colleague to collaborate on a project, host a larger meeting or just take a short break. In particular, ABW has been a popular choice for startups for a number of reasons. Startups, in particular, embrace workplace fluidity and employee autonomy – both of which are enabled by this way of working. And in an ABW environment, employees can choose the kind of space that inspires them and fuels their creativity, which increases productivity and employee engagement. The use of mobile or SaaS (Software as a Service) technologies as opposed to fixed networks and workstations contributes to this flexibility something that is intrinsic the ‘mobile culture’ of today’s workplace.

Examples of workplace innovations such as redefining organisational structures, reinventing human resources management or the creation of design-thinking environments, are all part of a new wave of workplace innovation. In response to a mostly millennial workforce, the latest phase of workplace innovation has now begun. Open-ended and experiential, these latest innovations in the workplace encourage people to shape workspaces as they need them.

¹ English writer, poet, philosopher, dramatist, journalist, orator, lay theologian, biographer, and literary and art critic (29/5/1874 – 14/6/1936)

The aim is to proactively engage and empower staff, colleagues and team members, channelling personal energy into the business at hand.

In a rapidly changing business world, it is impossible for workplaces to remain unchanged. For SMEs to be able to survive, grow and prosper, innovation at the very core of their business activities is a must. However, workplace innovation is a very specific type of innovation, requiring a different approach to innovation management altogether and different processes and tools, where the classic stage-gate models may not apply.

As such, we - **Startup Europe Regions Network (SERN)** - a leading European association of regional agencies devoted to startup and SME innovation created under the auspices of the [Startup Europe EC initiative](#) - and 3 regional/national agencies (**ART-ER**, Italy, **Cork City Council**, Ireland and **ANI**, Portugal) intend to encourage the uptake of workplace innovation initiatives and activities for the development of small-scale innovative (but with large outreach) projects that will address change in their organisational office/shop-floor culture and / or organisational processes in the delivery of this Call for Funding Proposals .

Why Workplace Innovation?

Building resilience while achieving and sustaining world-class levels of performance and innovation requires an integrated approach to investment in new technologies, skills and empowering workplace practices. Workplace innovation is about the systematic adoption of workplace practices, grounded in evidence, that unleash employee-led knowledge, skill and innovation at every level of the organisation, and is recognised as one further method to help retain and ultimately increase employment.

Evidence shows that workplace innovation leads to significant and sustainable improvements both in organisational performance (e.g. increased productivity, financial performance and profitability, and improved customer service), and in employee engagement and well-being (playing a particularly important role in reducing stress, enhancing job satisfaction and mental health, and improving retention).

These benefits are only fully realised when workplace innovation practices run throughout the entire company including individual learning and discretion, self-managed teams, open and fluid organisational structures, delegated decision-making, simplified administrative procedures, a coaching style of line management, regular opportunities for reflection, learning and improvement, high involvement innovation, entrepreneurial behaviour at all levels, and employee representation in strategic decisions. Transformative changes in performance and working life can be achieved when senior teams, line managers and employee representatives share a common understanding of workplace innovation and a commitment to making it happen. One of the most significant causes of failure in trying to create high performance and fantastic places to work is partial change – not recognising that organisations consist of interdependent parts which either nurture or obliterate innovative ways of working.

Our approach offers a practical, evidence-based approach to understanding workplace innovation and its impact on performance and working life. Such outcomes are not the product of a simple initiative or a leadership development programme. They are only found when four basic building blocks² are in place and combine to create surprising synergies:

² (Totterdill, 2020)

1. **Jobs, Teams and Technology;**
2. **Organisational Structures, Management and Processes;**
3. **Employee Driven Improvement and Innovation;**
4. **Co-Created Leadership and Employee Voice.**

Where to start?

This Workplace Innovation survey³ uses evidence-based indicators strongly associated with high performance and employee well-being. The survey targets specific practices where change is potentially needed and helps to ensure that interventions are successful. Results are translated into a practical response enabling you to create a clear strategy for effective and sustainable change.

Starting the Journey: which are your most pressing issues? Score each issue: 1 = No Problem / 10 = Severe Problem		Score
JOBS, TEAMS AND TECHNOLOGY	Frequent delays caused by breakdowns and bottlenecks	
	High levels of employee turnover and/or sickness absence	
	Minor problems are escalated to senior level	
	Poor team cohesion	
	Persistent customer complaints or quality problems	
	TOTAL SCORE FOR ELEMENT Score 5 – 14: Don't be complacent! Keep reviewing and refreshing the things you're doing right. Score 15 – 35: Focusing on effective job design, teamworking and the integration of technologies is a priority to enhance performance as well as employee engagement and well-being. Score 36 – 50: Urgent action is required to avoid further waste of opportunity and talent.	
STRUCTURES, MANAGEMENT	Line managers lack leadership skills	
	Ineffective performance management/appraisal system	

³ (Exton & Totterdill, 2018)

AND PROCESSES	Blame culture	
	Targets and deadlines drive out opportunities for learning and improvement	
	Departmental/organisational boundaries delay decisions and inhibit innovation	
	Work gets held up by poor coordination between departments	
	TOTAL SCORE FOR ELEMENT Score 5 – 14: Don't be complacent! Keep reviewing and refreshing the things you're doing right. Score 15 – 35: Rethinking the walls and ceilings that divide your organization is a priority to enhance performance as well as employee engagement and well-being. Score 36 – 50: Urgent action is required to remove obstacles to innovation and to avoid poor productivity as well as wasted opportunity and talent.	
EMPLOYEE DRIVEN IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION	We lack a culture of innovation	
	There are opportunities to improve or innovate but we rarely get around to pursuing them	
	People are frustrated that they have no outlet for their ideas	
	We need more effective ways of engaging employees in innovation and improvement	
	People are afraid or unwilling to challenge established practices	
TOTAL SCORE FOR ELEMENT Score 5 – 14: Don't be complacent! Keep reviewing and refreshing the things you're doing right. Score 15 – 35: Focusing on employee-driven innovation and improvement is a priority to enhance performance and employee engagement. Score 36 – 50: Urgent action is required to avoid further waste of opportunity and talent.		
CO-CREATED LEADERSHIP	There is a gap between senior management and the frontline	
	We don't share information with employees unless it is absolutely necessary	

AND EMPLOYEE VOICE	Senior managers micromanage the work of others rather than empowering them to take decisions	
	Decisions affecting the work of employees are taken without involving them	
	Our culture inhibits change	
	TOTAL SCORE FOR ELEMENT Score 5 – 14: Don't be complacent! Keep reviewing and refreshing the things you're doing right. Score 15 – 35: Rethinking leadership roles and behaviours is a priority to engage employees and drive change throughout the organisation. Score 36 – 50: Urgent action is required to address the significant gap between the senior team and the rest of the organisation and to improve the quality of a strategy, communication and decision-making.	

2. OBJECTIVES / THEMES / PRIORITIES

The primary goal of Start at Best is to contribute to the development of a European-led new wave of workplace innovation amongst global SMEs; particularly micro-firms and small and medium companies (Totterdill, 2020)⁴. The present project comes at a critical time: it is widely recognised that workplace innovation can enhance business competitiveness. EU companies, especially SMEs, need to get ready for the next wave of industrial change, digital transformation and new ways of working.

In the face of these challenges, Start at Best specifically aims to:

1. Raise the visibility and awareness of SMEs and micro-firms towards the relevance of workplace innovation for business competitiveness
2. Provide an added-value set of startup-inspired cases of workplace innovation, to help SMEs and micro-firms to conceive, develop and concretize their ideas and concepts
3. Communicate the results at a wide level and towards other sectors and regions, thus promoting the replication of successful initiatives across other industries and European countries.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition_en

2.1 Call for Proposals objectives

The Start at Best Call for Funding Proposals encourages startups and SMEs to re-imagine their individual workplaces, addressing opportunities for improvement to layout, design or equipment with the potential to drive workplace innovation practices (aligned with [INNOSUP-04-2019 - topic: Workplace innovation uptake by SMEs](#)):

- a new wave of workplace innovation among SMEs and micro-firms
- fund and expand new original, feasible, competitive and socially impactful workplace innovations able to fuel SME Competitiveness in Europe
- SME’s engagement in workplace innovation processes, alone or in collaboration with creators/designers/thinkers/artists or another service/solution provider

Please note that this Call for Funding Proposals is not intended to support new product or service development for the marketplace.

3. TIMETABLE

Stages	Date and time or indicative period
Publication of the call	March 2 nd , 2020
Deadline for submitting applications	June 3rd, 2020 - 17:00 CET
Evaluation period	Until 24 th June, 2020
Information to applicants	Until 31 st July, 2020
Signature of grant agreement	August/September 2020
Starting date of the activity	From 2 nd March 2020 to August 31 st , 2020
Maximum duration of the action/period of eligibility of costs	9 months

4. BUDGET

The total budget across the consortium is estimated at €225,000. The breakdown is as follows:

- a) Thirty individual grants to the value of €7,500 per grant will be available across the Consortium:
 - Under the **Start at Best National Open Call for Proposals 01/2020/EU**, only the **fifteen top-scored applications** will be selected for funding, according to the rules detailed in section 6
 - Under the **Start at Best National Open Call for Proposals 01/2020/IE, Start at Best National Open Call for Proposals 01/2020/IT and Start at Best National Open Call for Proposals 01/2020/PT** only the **five top-scored applications** will be selected for funding, according to the rules detailed in section 6.
- b) The maximum grant to be awarded per project (a maximum of one project per applicant/company can be awarded) will be €7,500.

4.1 Payment arrangements

As specified in the grant agreement, **an advance payment corresponding to 75% 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 grant agreement. The final amount of the grant **corresponding to 25% of the final payment** to be awarded to the beneficiary on completion of the action and submission of the activity report to the organisation who acted as the funding intermediary (see section 9).

5. PROCEDURES

The evaluation will be a three-step process

1. Verification of the eligibility of the applicants (section 6)
2. Evaluation of applications on the basis of the 3 criteria
 - Excellence, Impact and Implementation (section 7)
3. Selection for funding on the basis of the award criteria (section 8).

Only fully completed applications which meet all the eligibility requirements (set out below) will be considered in the final selection process.

6. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

6.1. Eligible applicants

- a) Applicants must be Micro, Small or Medium enterprises⁵ or entrepreneurs and individual sole-traders
- b) Applicants must be established in EU Member States or Horizon 2020 associated countries⁶
- c) Applicants must have commenced trading before 01.01.2018

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition_en

⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/research/jscp/index.cfm?pg=associated>

- d) Applicants may only submit an application under one Call for Funding Proposal Scheme
- e) If an applicant submits to more than one Call, only the first application received will be considered and it will be automatically excluded from the EU General Call for Proposals.

6.2. Eligible project applications

Project applications shall comply with the following requirements:

- a) The project must relate to at least one of the four actions described in 7.1
- b) The project can start between 02/03/2020 and 31/07/2020
- c) The project must have a maximum duration of 9 months
- d) An action may only receive one grant from the Start at Best budget. In no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the Start at Best budget, even if the four calls for grants are open at the same time
- e) No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed
- f) Applications must also comply with the following formal requirements:
 - o Applications must be made no later than the deadline referred to in section 3 of the present guidelines
 - o Submissions must be submitted using the online application form (see section 13 of the present guidelines)
 - o Submissions for this call must be completed in English (EN).

6.3. Financial capacity

Applicants must be able to demonstrate sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out or the year for which the grant is awarded and to participate in its funding. The applicants' financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of a Declaration of Honour.

6.4. Exclusion from participation

Applicants will be excluded from participating in the call for funding proposals if they do not present all the annexes signed by a legal representative.

7. EVALUATION CRITERIA

7.1. Eligible activities

Applicants will have to clearly explain, detail and demonstrate the various mechanisms put in place to drive workplace innovation. Implementing workplace innovation and facing challenges related to the new industrial revolution requires the correct managerial expertise and sufficient knowledge resources. In order to promote workplace innovation amongst small and micro enterprises, while financial incentives are important, the real challenge lies in providing them with the necessary knowledge and creative resources, accelerating and widening the collaboration of companies with creators/designers, thus creating a common language and understanding, and facilitating expert resources in areas such as networking, access to further funding or IPR.

Only applications which relate to one of the four actions described below will be considered as eligible⁷:

- **Action 1. Jobs, Teams and Technology**

Promoting employee initiative and the ability to work without close supervision, allowing on-the-spot decision making based on their background knowledge and accumulated experience. Useful to avoid delays caused by unnecessary referral to managers or manuals, employees can often help their customers and colleagues more effectively when they are trusted to use their judgement. Building a workplace in which employees can develop and deploy their competencies and creative potential begins with job design; to be developed in synchrony with the wider organisational context and having teamwork as the centre concept. Processes fostering job autonomy of the employees, flexible working; promoting self-managed teams and the integration of technology in the workplace will be eligible for Action 1.

- **Action 2. Organisational Structures, Management and Processes**

Dismantling organisational walls and ceilings that allocate people to departments, divisions, grades and professions inevitably tending to constrain the way that people work together, creating separate silos and barriers in the way of doing an efficient job. Even if some demarcations may be necessary reflecting different bodies of expertise and knowledge, Action 2 is intended to avoid fragmentation: different groups within an organisation should intertwine naturally in ways that share the richness around them, helping everyone understand other people’s jobs, professions, specialisms, priorities, problems and vision. Reducing organisational walls and ceilings, empowering employees’ initiative and developing Workplace Innovation via fairness, equality and the building of trust among all employees of the organisation will be highly cherished for the eligibility of Action 2.

- **Action 3. Employee Driven Improvement and Innovation**

A knowledge economy is the one firmly rooted in innovation, generally associated with Research & Development and ICT investment. However, this association turns out to be misleading. A Dutch study suggests that research and technology-led activity accounts for only 25% of innovation; the remaining 75% of successful innovation is generated by changing managerial, organisational and work practices at the enterprise level⁸. A continual stream of ideas is a vital resource for product, service or process improvement and innovation. This can be reflected in times and spaces where people at work can discuss ideas with their co-workers or in their team meetings, buzz boards to enable ideas to be shared or dedicated spaces to enable people to think in different ways together are good examples on how to facilitate employee-driven improvements and innovation. Processes that allow the continuous improvement as well as the promotion in the involvement of employees in innovation development, are key to support learning and allow employees to share knowledge and experience and are highly encouraged for projects addressing Action 3 for Workplace Innovation.

⁷ The network reserves the right to reallocate proposals under one of the other actions, should the topic proposed be more aligned with it.

⁸ (Volberda et al., 2011; Erasmus Competition and Innovation Monitor, 2009)

- **Action 4. Co-Created Leadership and Employee Voice**

At its most basic level workplace partnership is required to deal proactively with organisational and inter-organisational relations issues, ensuring early consultation on pay and conditions, employment changes and organisational restructuring. Partnership and co-leadership between management and employees can take many forms, but always requires openness, transparency and two-way communication, becoming at the very least; an effective tool for positive organisational relations, minimising conflict and resistance to change. When partnership arrangements exist alongside the types of participative workplace practices described previously it creates a system of mutually reinforcing practices leading to improved information sharing, greater levels of trust, reduced resistance to change and heightened performance. This combination of representative and direct involvement is known as “employee voice”⁹. Actions directed to foster Co-Created Leadership and the promotion of Employee Voice will have to implement procedures to motivate dialogue and representative participation, sustaining openness and transparency all along with the processes; enabling employees to involve in change and thus, integrating tacit and strategic knowledge.

7.2. Scoring

- **Excellence Criteria (5 points)**

This criterion will take into account:

- Clarity and consistency of the action with regards to the objectives of the call and adequacy to the needs identified (self-assessment tool “survey” of START-AT-BEST) (3 points)
- Alignment between the proposed actions and the proposed budget “value for money”, with the START-AT-BEST call objectives as described in section 2 and with the general objectives of the InnoSup-04-2019 Call¹⁰ proposed by the European Commission (2 points)

- **Impact Criteria (5 points)**

This criterion will take into account:

- Suitability of the methodology to the objectives considering the expected targets to be achieved by the end of the implementation period (2 points)
- The innovative character of the project (1,5 points)
- The potential replicability to other organisations or entities (1,5 points)

- **Implementation Criteria (5 points)**

This criterion will take into account:

- Indication of management skills required to effectively implement the proposed actions (1 point)
- To maximise impact, projects should have a clear and strong strategy for

⁹ (Boxall and Purcell, 2003)

¹⁰ See topic 2.1 “Call for proposals objectives”

communication and dissemination of their activities and results (1 point).

- Cost efficiency of the action considering the budget and the lump-sum strategy in relation to the number of staff members, actions and days affected (1 point)
- Concrete and realistic time plan for the implementation of the proposed activities (1 point)
- Sustainability of the proposed actions for the applicant organisation (1 point)

8. AWARD CRITERIA

Funding Applications will be evaluated by an expert panel, on the basis of the award criteria ‘excellence’, ‘impact’ and ‘quality and efficiency of the implementation’. The aspects to be considered in each case depend on the types of action as set out in the table below:

Criteria		Definitions	Score (Threshold)
1	Excellence	This criterion assesses the adequacy of the methodology to the objectives including the alignment with the challenge/actions defined by the START-AT-BEST open calls and with the general objectives of the InnoSup-04-2019 Call.	3/5; Weight 1
2	Impact	Proposals must define a clear set of deliverables aligned with the objectives of the open call and the specific category to which the proposal relates	3/5; Weight 1
3	Implementation	This criterion assesses the potential of the team, communication strategy and sustainability vis-à-vis the objective of the identified action (Actions 1-4).	3/5; Weight 1

Each criterion will be scored out of 5 (according to the sub-criteria detailed below). The threshold for individual criteria will be 3. The overall threshold, applying to the sum of the three individual scores, will be 10.

Using the scores given on the evaluation form, the “Network” will select the highest scoring proposals. The consortium may conclude that even the highest-scoring proposals are of inadequate quality, in which case it will make no selection. This conclusion is obligatory if all the proposals fall below the threshold scores given on the evaluation form.

9. REPORTING

The Final Report must be submitted within one month of completion of the project. One final report shall be submitted within 10 months after the entry into force of the Grant Agreement. It should include an Executive Summary of 2 pages maximum. The Executive Summary should be provided in English and in the national language under which the original Call for Funding Proposals was published (i.e. English, Italian or Portuguese) of the Call for Funding.

At a minimum, the final report must include:

- Comprehensive information on all the activities and approaches carried out in pursuit of the results set out in the technical specifications
- Problems encountered, solutions found and their impact on the outcomes achieved
- Conclusions and recommendations.

The final report should not exceed 10 pages, excluding annexes and it should be completed by annexes (if applicable).

10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

In the event of a grant awarded by the “Network”, a grant agreement drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding will be sent to the beneficiary, as well as the procedure in view to formalising the obligations of the parties. The 2 copies of the original grant agreement must be signed in the first instance by the beneficiary and returned immediately. The Network will sign them last.

11. PUBLICITY

11.1. By the beneficiaries

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the Start at Best 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 logo of the project and the EU logo on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products produced under the Funding Call.

To do this they must use the text, the logo and the disclaimer available at (<https://startatbest.eu/open-calls>). If this requirement is not fully complied with, the beneficiary’s grant may be reduced in accordance with the provisions of the grant agreement or grant decision.

11.2. By the Network and/or the Commission

All information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year shall be published on the Start at Best website and the website of the institutions no later than the 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded.

The Network and/or the Commission will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary
- the locality of the beneficiary
- the amount awarded
- nature and purpose of the grant

The successful applicant may be exempt from engaging with media and PR activities 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.

11.3 Communication and Dissemination

To maximise impact, projects should have a clear and strong strategy for communication and dissemination of their activities and results and applicants must provide enough time and resources to communicate and interact appropriately with peers, audiences and local communities as appropriate.

Beneficiaries will be required as stipulated in the grant agreement to produce a public summary/report in English providing information about their work and the results of their project. The public summary/report must be included in the final report submitted to the Agency. The report may be used by the Start at Best to provide information on the results of projects.

The Network may identify good practices and prepare relevant dissemination materials to be shared within and across all participating countries and beyond. Data and results from projects will be made freely available to be used by stakeholders, policymakers and others in a wide range of ways.

Beneficiaries may be required to attend and to participate in events organised by the Network to share their experience with other participants and/or policymakers.

12. DATA PROTECTION

All personal data (such as names, addresses, CVs, etc.) will be processed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the European Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. Unless marked as optional, the applicant's replies to the questions in the application form are necessary to evaluate and further process the grant application in accordance with the specifications of the call for proposals. Personal data will be processed solely for that purpose by the department or Unit responsible for the Start at Best grant programme concerned (entity acting as data controller).

Personal data may be transferred on a need to know basis to third parties involved in the evaluation of applications or in the grant management procedure,

without prejudice of transfer to the bodies in charge of monitoring and inspection tasks in accordance with European Union law. In particular, for the purposes of safeguarding the financial interests of the Union, personal data may be transferred to internal audit services, to the European Court of Auditors, to the Financial Irregularities Panel or to the European Anti-Fraud Office and between authorising officers of the Commission and the executive agencies.

The applicant has the right of access to, and to rectify, the data concerning him or her. For any question relating to data management, control and dissemination, please contact the Controller. Applicants have the right of recourse to the European Data Protection Supervisor at any time. A detailed Privacy statement is available on Start at Best website: <https://startatbest.eu/privacy-policy/>.

Applicants and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, are informed that should they be in one of the situations mentioned in:

- the Commission Decision of 13.11.2014 on the Early Warning System (EWS) for the use of authorised officers of the Commission and the executive agencies (OJ, L 369/68, 14.11.2014, p. 68), or

- the Commission Regulation 1302/2008 of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database – CED (OJ L 344, 20.12.2008, p. 12),

their personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the EWS only or both in the EWS and CED and communicated to the persons and entities listed in the above-mentioned Decision and Regulation, in relation to the award or the execution of a procurement contract or a grant agreement or grant decision.

13. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

13.1 Publication

The call for proposals is being published on the Internet website of the Start at Best at the following address: <https://startatbest.eu/open-calls/>.

13.2 Submission of the call for funding proposals application

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the eligibility requirements set out under section 6. No modifications to the application are 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 Network may contact the applicant for this purpose during the evaluation process. All applicants will be informed in writing of the results of the selection process to the email address provided by the applicant in the application form.

An online application system has been set up. Grant applications must be drawn up in English (EN) - except where explicitly stated otherwise - using the online form specifically designed for this purpose. The online application can be obtained on the Internet at the following address: <https://startatbest.eu/open-calls/>.

Proposals must be submitted by the deadline cited in the Call for Proposals and in "Section 3. Timetable" of the present Guidelines before **17:00 CET**, using the online application form. Applicants should note that no applications submitted after 17.00 CET on the deadline will be accepted.

Applications are very strongly encouraged not to wait until the final day to submit their application. Please note that no other method of submission of an application will be accepted.

Applications submitted in any other way will be automatically rejected. No exceptions will be made. Make sure that you have officially submitted your electronic application form and that you have received an e-mail acknowledgement of your submission with a reference number.

Applicants shall ensure that all the documents requested and mentioned in the application form are provided electronically. No changes to the application can be made after the deadline for the submission of applications. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects, the network may contact the applicant for this purpose.

In order to prove their legal capacity and their status, all applicants must provide a **signed Legal Entity Form (Annex 1)** with its supporting evidence. The form is available on https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/how-eu-funding-works/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/forms-contracts_en.

The dossier must also include **Annex 2** presenting the name of the applicant and their eligible status and **Annex 3** declaring their honour.

Information supplied to any applicant will be equally available to all through the Start at Best website.

Only applications that fulfil the eligibility criteria will be considered for a grant. If an application is deemed ineligible, an email indicating the reasons will be sent to the applicant.

13.3 Evaluation procedure

Proposals are evaluated by independent experts. As part of the evaluation by independent experts, the eligible proposals will be ranked according to the award criteria defined and weighted in section 8 of the present guidelines. Within the limit of the available budget, applications obtaining the highest scores will be selected.

The assessment is made solely on the basis of the documents sent by the relevant deadline. Nevertheless, the Network reserves the right to request additional information from the applicant.

13.4 Award decision

Only after completion of the procedure mentioned above, is the selection process finalised and the award decision adopted by the Network. Applicants will be informed of the results of the selection within four weeks of the date of adoption of the award decision.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive an email stating the reasons why their application was not selected.

Once applicants are informed, the list of selected proposals will be published on the website of the Start at Best and of the Network: <http://startupregions.eu/news-2/>.

13.5 Contacts

For any further information please contact Start at Best at <https://startatbest.eu/contacts>

or at

Avenue des Arts, 24
B-1000 Brussels
Tel: +32 2 8080322

Contact within the Network:

startatbest@startupregions.eu

If you encounter a technical problem in relation to the online application form, please ensure that you contact the HelpDesk well in advance of the deadline for submission: <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/home/helpparticipants>.

13.6 Annexes

- Application Form Call for Proposals 01/2020 (Template only)
- Annexe 1: Legal Entity Form
- Annexe 2: Eligibility Check Form (PDF format)
- Annexe 3: Declaration of Honour (PDF format)
- Sample Grant Agreement

All the annexes are available on the Start at Best website: <https://startatbest.eu/open-calls/>.