



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

COSMIC - 2nd OPEN CALL

AI & Data Solutions to Boost the Green Transition



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union under Grant Agreement no. 101189676. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HADEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



2nd Open Call - Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a startup in COSMIC?	5
2. What is an SME in COSMIC?	5
3. What does the application process look like?	5
4. What is the timeline for the COSMIC Open Call?	6
5. When will the evaluation phase be concluded, and when will projects start?	6
6. How many applications are expected?	6
7. What Technology Readiness Level (TRL) is required for proposals?	6
8. Is it possible to apply as a consortium of two SMEs?	7
9. If a consortium of two SMEs applied, would both need to submit the Declaration of Honour and other documents?	7
10. What does “30% co-financing” mean?	8
11. What document is needed to confirm that 30% co-financing has been secured?	8
12. What does the selection process look like?	8
13. Will sample data from pilot companies/cities be available before the end of the application period (27 October 2025)?	8
14. Can the applicant apply with its own pilot/use case, or must the project be based only on listed/participating pilots?	9
15. The call and CTFs seem to focus on solutions for residential applications. Can applicants also submit industry-focused solutions?	9
16. Is the 1st COSMIC Open Call open only to SMEs? If so, can a Research & Technology Organisation (RTO) participate as a subcontractor to an SME applicant?	9
17. Would the COSMIC Open Call include AI-based approaches for sustainable transport systems or optimizing energy-related infrastructure to support the green transition?	10
18. Can applicants from Switzerland participate in the COSMIC Open Call?	10
19. Are UK startups eligible to apply?	10
20. If applying from a non-EU country (e.g. Norway), is an EU partner required?	10
21. Are there financial eligibility requirements (e.g. profitability or positive cash flow)?	10
22. Do startups / SMEs need to submit a balance sheet or other documents when applying?	11
23. Do we need to use and provide the Excel budget table from Horizon Europe? Are there guidelines on how to use it?	11
24. Are the TRL requirements strict, and what are the starting and target TRLs?	11
25. Do proposals need to align with all relevant Core Technical Facilitators (CTFs) for the chosen challenge?	11
26. Is there an “open track” or must applications address specific challenges?	12

2nd Open Call - Frequently Asked Questions

27. Where can I find detailed technical information about the Core Technical Facilitators (CTFs) and Core Social Facilitator (CSF)?	12
28. Is an in-kind contribution accepted as part of the co-financing?	12
29. Should the proposal list exact names of all team members, or is it enough to indicate roles?	12
30. Are overhead costs included within the €150,000 grant?	12
31. How does the 30% co-financing for for-profit companies work?	12
32. How many applications can one entity submit?	13
33. When will the funding be awarded and how is it paid?	13
34. Who will own the intellectual property (IPR) of the developed and researched solution?	13
35. Can companies reuse the developed software after the project?	14
36. Is COSMIC a one-time call or will there be future submission rounds?	14
37. Can a project proposal for Challenge 8 be based on implementation in a single pilot?	14
38. Does the project scope need to be for consumer solutions or can it also be for facility solutions?	14
39. Do I always need a hardware component for my project?	14
40. Does the financial check require sharing only last year's annual report? For eligibility, is prior positive cash flow or profitability required, or does financial difficulty automatically exclude an applicant?	14
41. Should proposals include data collection, or do some challenges already have it implemented in the CTF? How can applicants access information on existing data, and should it be included in the budget?	15
42. For Challenge 7, is it compulsory to develop both apps - for end users and building managers?	15
43. Is there a way to export the template from the online application system?	15
44. For Challenge 14, is the use of open source software a "must-have" or "nice-to-have" requirement?	16
45. For Challenge 14, are CTFs optional for SMEs or mandatory for participation?	16
46. What exactly should third parties do with the CTFs?	16
47. Can a SME owner working on the project as a freelancer (not receiving a salary) be included under "personnel costs"?	17
48. Please clarify IPR. In ideal examples, the final review involves providing the full source code, AI models, and other relevant materials. How does this align with the statement that IPR will remain with the applicant?	17
49. If we publish open adapters, what type of licensing is acceptable (e.g., open source, permissive)?	17

2nd Open Call - Frequently Asked Questions

50. Is on-site deployment at a pilot location required, or can we start with remote integration using pilot data (CH15)?	18
51. Will pilot data be provided, or do applicants need to use their own datasets (CH8)?	18
52. Will the solution need to be highly tailored to the Porto Renewable Energy Community (REC), or should it be designed for replicability (CH13)?	18
53. Do we need to integrate our solution with the APP from Pilot 1.2 (CH13)?	18
54. What does the current waste management system in the pilot community consist of?	18
55. Regarding Challenge 8, are two different pilots expected to be carried out in Finland and Spain, or is it expected that one of them will be selected in our proposal?	19
MEET THE CONSORTIUM	20

1. What is a startup in COSMIC?

In COSMIC, a startup is generally understood as a young, tech-oriented company. Typical characteristics include:

- Fewer than **10 employees** (but usually more than 2 full-time equivalent staff)
- Operating for **less than three years**
- Showing strong growth potential, for example, through early-stage private sector investment (e.g., over €50,000) or significant annual sales growth (e.g., more than 50%)

These characteristics are provided as guidance to give applicants a sense of the types of companies COSMIC typically supports.

2. What is an SME in COSMIC?

An SME is defined according to the **European Commission's Recommendation 2003/361/EC**. The criteria are:

- **Headcount:** fewer than 250 Annual Work Units (AWU),
- **Annual turnover:** ≤ €50 million **OR**
- **Annual balance sheet total:** ≤ €43 million.

Figures of partners and linked enterprises must also be considered (see the [SME User Guide](#)).

3. What does the application process look like?

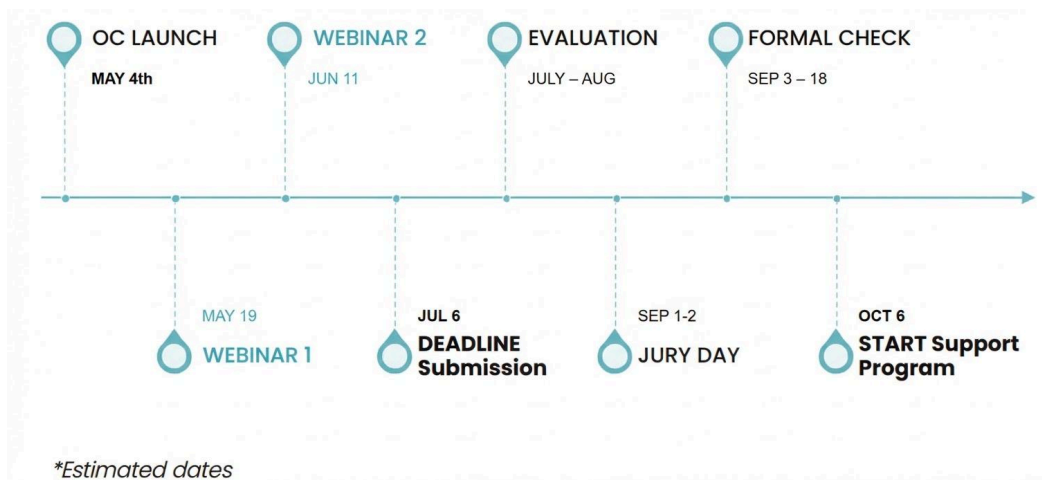


2nd Open Call - Frequently Asked Questions

The application process is simple and fully online. First, go to [the application portal](#) and register. Make sure to **read the Guide for Applicants and Technical Guidelines** before starting your application.

You can then fill in the mandatory fields and submit your proposal - but **don't wait until the last moment!** Remember, **you can edit and update your application** as many times as needed before the deadline.

4. What is the tentative timeline for the COSMIC Open Call?



5. When will the evaluation phase be concluded, and when will projects start?

The evaluation phase is planned to conclude in August 2026, and applicants will be informed of the results shortly after. The support program is scheduled to start in October 2026.

6. How many applications are expected?

We aim to select 32 applicants for Jury Day and up to 13 final beneficiaries.

7. What Technology Readiness Level (TRL) is required for proposals?

The **Technology Readiness Level (TRL)** is a scale from **1 to 9** used to assess the maturity of a technology, from initial concept (**TRL 1**) to a proven system in operational use (**TRL 9**).

For COSMIC:

- Solutions should start at a **minimum of TRL 3**, with initial validation at a small scale (typically TRL 3–5).
- Through COSMIC’s industrial pilots, the solution should be ready for further testing, refinement, and demonstration to reach **higher maturity (TRL 6–7)**.

TRL scale overview:

TRL	Description
1	Basic principles observed
2	Technology concept formulated
3	Experimental proof of concept
4	Technology validated in lab
5	Technology validated in relevant environment
6	Technology demonstrated in relevant environment
7	System prototype demonstrated in operational environment
8	System complete and qualified
9	Actual system proven in operational use

8. Is it possible to apply as a consortium of two SMEs?

No. Only **individual SMEs or startups** can apply. Applications from consortia are not eligible.

9. If a consortium of two SMEs applied, would both need to submit the Declaration of Honour and other documents?

Not applicable, since **consortia are not eligible**. Only individual SMEs and startups can apply.

Please note that at this stage, we do not ask for any additional documents. Applicants only need to upload the **Gantt chart**.

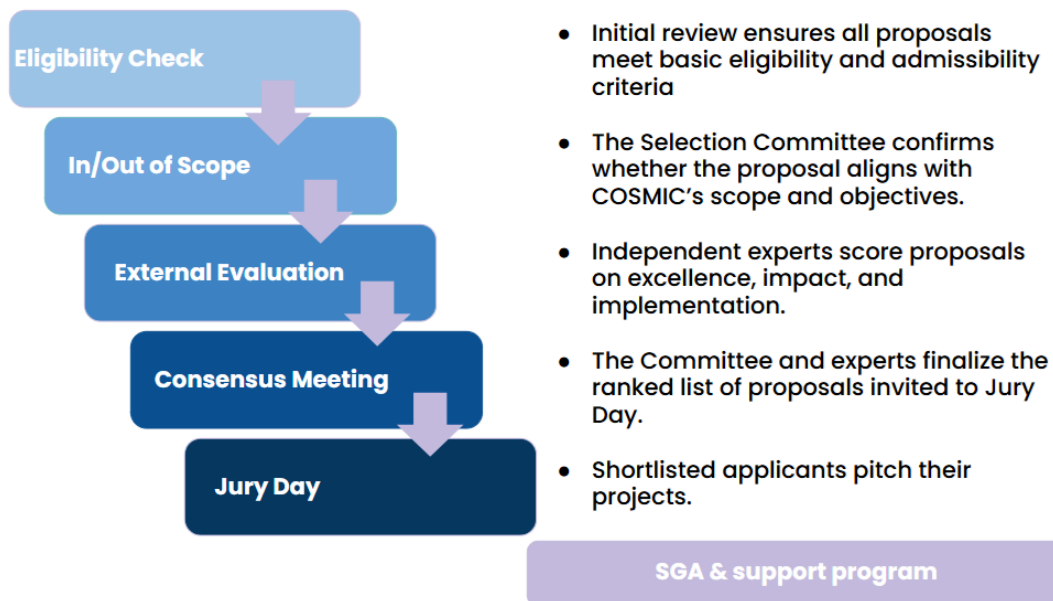
10. What does “30% co-financing” mean?

Each for-profit SME or startup must cover **30% of the total budget** on their side. COSMIC funding will cover up to **70%** of the project budget (up to €150,000 per beneficiary).

11. What document is needed to confirm that 30% co-financing has been secured?

There is no specific document required. The funding is provided as a **lump sum**, and payments are made against the approved deliverables, mandatory at each milestone. Ensuring co-financing is the **responsibility of the beneficiary**.

12. What does the selection process look like?



13. Will sample data from pilot companies/cities be available before the end of the application period (6 July 2026)?

No, it will not be possible to test solutions with data from the pilot companies/cities before the submission deadline. Data and COSMIC tools will be made available to selected applicants

once the support programme starts. If you have specific questions regarding individual pilots, please send your inquiry to helpdesk.cosmic@fundingbox.com

14. Can the applicant apply with its own pilot/use case, or must the project be based only on listed/participating pilots?

Please note that COSMIC applications must be based on the listed pilots; external pilots or use cases are not eligible.

15. The call and CTFs seem to focus on solutions for residential applications. Can applicants also submit industry-focused solutions?

Yes. While COSMIC includes challenges related to residential applications, the project explicitly targets large-scale energy resource optimisation and also encourages industrial-focused solutions. COSMIC builds an ecosystem where large industries provide datasets and pilot sites, and SMEs contribute AI- and data-driven innovations. Solutions integrating AI for energy and IT management in industrial infrastructures are fully aligned with the project's mission and are eligible to participate, especially if they can be validated in large-scale pilots in industrial or urban environments.

However, the most important aspect is that your solution **directly addresses the objectives of the specific challenge**, as alignment with the challenge is critical for evaluation and impact assessment in the call.

16. Is the 2nd COSMIC Open Call open only to SMEs? If so, can a Research & Technology Organisation (RTO) participate as a subcontractor to an SME applicant?

Please note that only SMEs and start-ups (both for-profit and non-profit) are eligible to apply. Non-profit organisations that do not meet the SME/start-up definition under EC Recommendation 2003/361/EC are not eligible to apply directly.

However, subcontracting is possible. It must be described and justified in the application form, may cover only a limited part of the action (up to 15% of the maximum grant), and must be performed in eligible countries. Please note that the essential activities of the proposals submitted by SMEs/start-ups cannot be subcontracted.

17. Would the COSMIC Open Call include AI-based approaches for sustainable transport systems or optimising energy-related infrastructure to support the green transition?

Each proposal must align with **one defined challenge out of the 16 challenges** outlined in the call. An SME or start-up may apply to up to 3 different challenges, one per proposal. The Technical Guidelines provide detailed descriptions of these challenges to help determine where a particular idea may fit.

18. Can applicants from Switzerland participate in the COSMIC Open Call?

Switzerland is currently not eligible to participate, as it is not listed among the eligible Associated Countries. The association agreement with Switzerland is still under negotiation, and until it officially enters into force, applicants from Switzerland cannot take part.

19. Are UK startups eligible to apply?

Yes. UK entities are eligible as the United Kingdom is an Associated Country to Horizon Europe.

20. If applying from a non-EU country (e.g. Norway), is an EU partner required?

No. Entities from countries listed as Associated Countries - even if they are not EU Member States - may apply independently under the same conditions as EU applicants, provided they are not explicitly excluded and do not have additional eligibility restrictions. **Consortia are not eligible; only single-entity applications are accepted.**

21. Are there financial eligibility requirements (e.g. profitability or positive cash flow)?

Applicants must demonstrate financial capacity to implement the project. Entities that are facing financial difficulties will not be eligible to receive funding.

22. Do startups / SMEs need to submit a balance sheet or other documents when applying?

No, you do **not need to attach any documents when submitting your application**. If your proposal is selected, you will be asked to provide documents to **confirm your formal status and eligibility** before signing the Sub-Grant Agreement.

These documents may include (but are not limited to): company registration, legal representation (or power of attorney), tax ID number, ownership structure, financial statements, staff headcount, and bank identification details. The COSMIC Consortium will verify them before confirming your participation in the programme.

23. Do we need to use and provide the Excel budget table from Horizon Europe? Are there guidelines on how to use it?

No, you **do not need to attach an Excel file** when submitting your application. The application form includes a dedicated **budget section**, where you should provide information on eligible costs such as personnel, travel, subcontracting, and other relevant expenses. This section outlines what types of costs can be included and how they should be presented in your proposal.

24. Are the TRL requirements strict, and what are the starting and target TRLs?

Yes. Proposals must aim to reach a **Technology Readiness Level (TRL) between 6 and 7** by the end of the project. This means your solution must start at a **minimum of TRL 3**, with initial validation at a small scale (typically TRL 3–5), and be ready for further testing, refinement, and demonstration through COSMIC's industrial pilots to reach higher maturity (TRL 6–7).

25. Do proposals need to align with all relevant Core Technical Facilitators (CTFs) for the chosen challenge?

No. Proposals should demonstrate strong alignment with **at least one** relevant CTF for the selected challenge.

26. Is there an “open track” or must applications address specific challenges?

Each proposal must target one of the published thematic challenges.

27. Where can I find detailed technical information about the Core Technical Facilitators (CTFs) and Core Social Facilitator (CSF)?

All CTFs and CSF descriptions and documentation are available in the Technical Guidelines.

28. Is an in-kind contribution accepted as part of the co-financing?

Yes, in-kind contributions such as personnel time, equipment use, or lab access may be accepted. In your application, you can briefly explain how you plan to provide this required contribution, including personal effort from company founders and work by any hired staff.

29. Should the proposal list exact names of all team members, or is it enough to indicate roles?

It is sufficient to indicate the **roles or positions** of team members (e.g., project manager, Python programmer, data analyst) rather than their exact names. Only the core team may be named if relevant.

30. Are overhead costs included within the €150,000 grant?

Yes. Overheads are part of the granted amount and cannot be added on top.

31. How does the 30% co-financing for for-profit companies work?

For-profit SMEs must provide **30% co-financing**. For example:

- If the **COSMIC grant is €150,000** (covering 70% of the total project budget),
- The **total project budget** would be approximately **€214,286**,
- The company must contribute the remaining **€64,286 (30%)** from its own funds.

This ensures that COSMIC covers up to 70% of the project costs, while the applicant provides at least 30% as self-financing.

32. How many applications can one entity submit?

You may submit up to three proposals in total – one per challenge. However, only one proposal per entity can be selected for funding. Multiple submissions to the same challenge are not allowed; if more than one proposal is submitted for the same challenge, only the most recent one will be evaluated.

33. When will the funding be awarded and how is it paid?

Once your eligibility is confirmed and the **Sub-Grant Agreement** is signed, you will become an official beneficiary of the COSMIC programme. Selected grantees receive a **fixed lump sum of up to €150,000**.

The payment is made in **four instalments**, each released **after the evaluation and successful completion of the corresponding project stage**.

The lump sum simplifies expense reporting - you **do not need to submit detailed invoices**, but you must show that the project progresses according to the milestones in your *Individual Mentoring Plan* (IMP). Progress and quality of work are assessed during interim reviews.

34. Who will own the intellectual property (IPR) of the developed and researched solution?

In accordance with [the Guide for Applicants \(Section 7\)](#), the intellectual property rights (IPR) to results generated under the project will remain with the participant who has produced them. Each beneficiary retains ownership of its own results.

Where results are jointly developed with COSMIC consortium partners and cannot be reasonably separated, such results shall be subject to joint ownership. In such cases, the parties concerned will establish a joint ownership agreement defining the terms of use and exploitation.

The European Union does not claim ownership of any results generated under this project. For detailed provisions, please refer to *Article 27 (Ownership of Results)* of the Sub-Grant Agreement template.

35. Can companies reuse the developed software after the project?

Yes. Beneficiaries may reuse and commercialise their results, provided COSMIC visibility requirements and any applicable licensing obligations are respected.

36. Will there be future submission rounds?

COSMIC is currently running its second and last Open Call. No additional submission rounds are foreseen.

37. Does the project scope need to be for consumer solutions, or can it also be for facility solutions?

The project scope does not need to be limited to consumer solutions. Solutions can also target facilities, industrial environments, or other non-consumer contexts, as long as they address the objectives and requirements of the challenge.

38. Do I always need a hardware component for my project?

No. You do not always need a hardware component. Your proposal can focus solely on software, AI, or digital solutions if that represents the core of your work. Any hardware included can be described as supporting or enabling your main solution, but it is not mandatory unless explicitly stated in the Challenge description.

39. Does the financial check require sharing only last year's annual report? For eligibility, is prior positive cash flow or profitability required, or does financial difficulty automatically exclude an applicant?

The financial check is not limited to last year's annual report and may require other financial documents to assess the applicant's capacity and stability. The annual report (or financial statements) from the last year is typically one of the documents required as part of the financial check process. Thanks to them, we can review your balance sheet, profit and loss statement and equity position to assess whether your organisation falls under the definition of an "undertaking in difficulty" and whether your financial situation meets the programme's eligibility criteria.

2nd Open Call - Frequently Asked Questions

There is no strict rule that you must show a profit or positive cash flow to be eligible. However, continuous losses or negative cash flow may indicate that the organisation is in financial difficulty, which could lead to exclusion or require a restructuring assessment. In practice, we will look at whether your balance sheet is stable, whether losses exceed acceptable limits, and whether equity has been significantly reduced.

If the company meets the criteria of an “undertaking in difficulty”, it generally cannot receive any grant in the COSMIC project.

40. Should proposals include data collection, or do some challenges already have it implemented in the CTF? How can applicants access information on existing data, and should it be included in the budget?

Some challenges already have data collection in place, while others require proposals to include it. Technical details are in the Technical Guidelines, and for additional information, please contact the helpdesk. Include any necessary data collection in your budget if not already provided.

41. Is there a way to export the template from the online application system?

No, the template cannot be exported from the online application system. However, the application **does allow adding contributors**, and the template files are shared in the documents package of the open call.

42. What exactly should third parties do with the CTFs?

CTFs are provided for two main purposes:

1. To provide support (e.g., data) and, if necessary, an execution environment for SME solutions.
2. To support the deployment and scaling of solutions in the pilots.

For some challenges will provide pilot data in a unified way (e.g., via an API), so SMEs do not have to handle disparate data sources or poor documentation. Other challenges will integrate to address the full use case.

43. Can a SME owner working on the project as a freelancer (not receiving a salary) be included under “personnel costs”?

Yes, an SME owner who is actively working on the project can be included under “personnel costs” even if they are not receiving a salary as an employee, as long as the compensation reflects actual work contributed to the project.

The key is that the payment must correspond to the time and effort spent on project tasks. If the compensation is more in the form of an external service contract unrelated to actual personnel effort, then it should be reported under “services”.

44. Please clarify IPR. In ideal examples, the final review involves providing the full source code, AI models, and other relevant materials. How does this align with the statement that IPR will remain with the applicant?

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) remain with the applicant. Sharing source code, AI models, or other materials for review is solely for evaluation purposes and does **not transfer ownership**. Applicants retain full rights to their work and can decide how to use or commercialise it.

Where results are **jointly developed** with COSMIC consortium partners and cannot be reasonably separated, such results will be subject to **joint ownership**, with a joint ownership agreement defining the terms of use and exploitation.

45. If we publish open adapters, what type of licensing is acceptable (e.g., open source, permissive)?

Published open adapters should use an **open-source license**. Permissive licenses are acceptable, provided they comply with the project’s requirements and any applicable COSMIC visibility rules.

MEET THE CONSORTIUM

