

Open call for proposals

EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction

Building Future-Ready STEM Talent

28DIGITAL

<https://28digital.eu/>

Brussels| October 2026

Contents

Abbreviations	3
1. Introduction	4
1.1 Information on the EIT	4
1.2 Information on EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction	5
1.3 Information on 28DIGITAL	5
2. Overview of key information on the call	6
3. Description of the call	8
3.1 Purpose and scope of activities	8
3.2 Main requirements for applicants	9
3.3 Main requirements for project implementation	13
4. Financial aspects of the call	18
4.1 KIC funding	18
4.2 Payment arrangements	18
4.3 Cost eligibility	19
5. Call criteria	20
5.1 Admissibility	20
5.2 Eligibility	21
5.3 Exclusion criteria	24
5.4 Selection criteria	26
5.5 Award criteria	27
6. Evaluation procedure	30
6.1 Evaluation of proposals	30

6.2 Communication of evaluation results to applicants	31
6.3 Standstill period	32
6.4 Publication of recipients of funds annually	32
6.5 Appeal process	33
7. Other terms and conditions	33
7.1 Acceptance of the call conditions	33
7.2 Cancellation of the call	34
7.3 Data protection	34
7.4 Confidentiality	35
7.5 Avoidance of conflict of interest	35
7.6 Ethics and values	36
7.7 Intellectual property rights	36
7.8 Withdrawal of the funding – Recovery of undue amounts	36
7.9 Checks, reviews, audits and investigations	37
7.10 Communication, dissemination and visibility	37
7.11 Applicable law	38
7.12 Settlement of disputes	38
Annex 1 Timeline	39
Annex 2: Core quality standard requirements	40

Abbreviations

EIT	European Institute of Innovation and Technology
KIC	Knowledge and Innovation Community
EIT SIA	EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda
HE MGA	Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement
EIT KPIs	Set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) defined by the EIT and reflect the EIT objectives for education, entrepreneurship, and innovation. The KPIs measure how effectively a KIC/project meets the objectives of the EIT.
FSTP	Financial support to third parties
QC team	The Quality Check Team is responsible for the quality assurance of the education programmes against the core quality requirements. It operates on behalf of EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction under the coordination of EIT Food.

Definitions

Knowledge Triangle Integration	The integration and interaction of higher education, research and innovation, and business to strengthen the development, transfer, and application of knowledge, skills, and innovation.
Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement	The Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement (HE MGA) sets out the rights and obligations and the terms and conditions applicable to the implementation of the EIT grant.
Deliverable	Deliverables are tangible or intangible goods or service produced during the project implementation phase. They track the progress made towards a project's objectives and may take the form of a report, document, product, course, event or any other building block of a project. The deliverables specified need to fully demonstrate the project's achievements and the judicious use of public funds.
Learning Outcome	Statements regarding what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, defined in terms of knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy. For the purposes of the EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction, learning outcomes are expressed through the competencies and levels defined in the EIT STEM Competency Framework.

1. Introduction

1.1 Information on the EIT

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) was created in 2008 by the European Union (EU) to enhance Europe's global competitiveness by fostering collaboration between businesses, research institutions, and higher education organizations.

The EIT is governed by [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/695](#) (EIT Regulation), which aligns the EIT's mission with the EU's priorities and the objectives of Horizon Europe on evolving research, innovation, economic growth, job creation, global competitiveness, sustainable growth, higher education and entrepreneurship, by means of the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), which address specific societal challenges and are established and supported by the EIT.

The [EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda \(SIA\) 2021-2027](#) is aligned with [Horizon Europe](#) and lays down the priority fields and the strategy of the EIT for future initiatives, capacity to generate the best innovation added-value, objectives, key actions, mode of operation, expected results, impact, as well as an estimate of the resources needed for the duration of Horizon Europe.

The EIT Regulation defines KICs as large-scale Institutionalised European Partnerships of higher education institutions, research organisations, companies and other stakeholders in the innovation process in the form of a strategic network, regardless of its legal form, based on joint mid- to long-term innovation planning to meet the EIT's challenges and contribute to attaining the objectives established.

The Memorandum of Cooperation between the EIT and 28DIGITAL entered into force on 1 January 2025.

The **Grant Agreement** (GA) is the contractual instrument laying down the provisions concerning the implementation of the KIC activities (KIC Business Plan, Cross-KIC activities, etc.) through grants, on an annual or multi-annual basis of up to three years with the KICs. The Grant Agreement (2026-2027) between the EIT and 28DIGITAL entered into force on January 1, 2026 once signed.

In accordance with the Grant Agreement (Annex 5), the KIC launches calls (i.e. open calls or KIC partnership calls) in order to select projects. The KIC awards a "financial support to third parties" (i.e. the so called "subgrants" and "prizes") for the implementation of these projects and signs **subgrant agreements** ("Financial Support Agreements") with the selected entities or consortia.

1.2 Information on EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction

The EIT Cross-KIC Entrepreneurial Education and Skills Cluster brings together eight Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), including 28DIGITAL, to develop a comprehensive, cross-sectoral education portfolio. By leveraging the complementary expertise of the participating KICs, the Cluster delivers innovative educational programmes, scales high-quality training across Europe, and contributes to the achievement of key EU policy priorities, including the Union of Skills.

Together with the Girls Go STEM and the EIT Higher Education Initiative, EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction contributes to addressing Europe's STEM skills gap by supporting the upskilling and reskilling of one million Europeans by 2028 through both direct and indirect interventions. Specifically, EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction seeks to increase the participation of learners from diverse backgrounds in STEM education and careers through the delivery of targeted STEM learning opportunities and induction activities. The Initiative aims to engage and educate at least 700,000 learners while facilitating their induction and re-induction into STEM-related education pathways and labour market opportunities, thereby strengthening the future European STEM talent pipeline.

This ambition is aligned with the [European Commission's STEM Education Strategic Plan: Skills for competitiveness and innovation](#), which sets out a strategic framework for strengthening STEM education and skills development across Europe and for building a stronger and more inclusive STEM talent pipeline. In this context, the Strategic Plan foresees STEM Tech Talent Induction as a strategic initiative with the EIT playing a key role in coordinating the action.

For the purposes of the EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction Initiative, STEM should be understood as encompassing the fields of natural sciences, mathematics and statistics; information and communication technologies; engineering, manufacturing and construction as well as relevant interdisciplinary fields, such as health where they have a clear STEM component. The Initiative will support learning and induction activities across these fields, with a focus on developing the STEM skills and competencies needed to strengthen participation in STEM education, employment and innovation opportunities across Europe.

1.3 Information on 28DIGITAL

28DIGITAL aims at global impact through European innovation fuelled by entrepreneurial talent and digital technology. 28DIGITAL strengthens Europe's position in the digital world by delivering breakthrough digital innovations to the market and breeding entrepreneurial talent for economic growth and improved quality of life. 28DIGITAL helps business and entrepreneurs to be at the frontier of digital innovation by providing them with technology, talent, and growth support.

EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction has entrusted 28DIGITAL the operational management and implementation of this Call for Proposals. This includes applicant support, administration of the evaluation process, grant management, project monitoring of funded projects. 28DIGITAL ensures the efficient and transparent implementation of the Call in accordance with the objectives, procedures, and quality requirements established by EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction.

2. Overview of key information on the call

Call reference number, acronym	EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction 2026 Call: Building Future-Ready STEM Talent
Call opening and deadline for applications	Call publication / opening: 14 th October 2026 Deadline for applications: 14 th December 2026, 17:00 CET
Evaluation and implementation timeline (indicative)	Evaluation of proposals: 18 th December 2026 to 11 th February 2027 Communication of results to applicants: 12 th February 2027 Tentative start of the projects: 1 st April 2027 Tentative end of the projects: 31 st December 2027
Maximum EIT funding allocated to this call	The maximum EIT funding allocated to this Call is up to EUR 2,000,000
List of call documents	• Call text • Call FAQ • EIT STEM Competence Framework
List of reference documents (with links)	• Strategic Innovation Agenda of the EIT (SIA) 2021–2027 • Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement (HE MGA) • EU Grants AGA – Annotated Grant Agreement • EIT Impact Framework (2022–2027) • European Commission STEM Education Strategic Plan: Skills for competitiveness and innovation • Vision for the European Space Economy • JRC guide on STEM and STEAM education and disciplinary integration • ISCED – International Standard Classification of Education
Link to the submission portal	Step 1: register your organisation in the EU Funding & tender opportunities portal to obtain the nine-digit Participant Identification Code (PIC number). You can verify if your organisation is already registered and has a PIC number on the EU Portal (here).

	Step 2: Create an account and submit your application via the 28DIGITAL application platform.
Contact point	Oana Neagu, Education Lead oana.neagu@28digital.eu
Further information to interested applicants	Two webinars will be organized to provide additional information to the applicants to improve their chances of successful applications on the following dates: • 26th October 2026 • 19th November 2026

3. Description of the call

3.1 Purpose and scope of activities

Europe is experiencing increasing demand for skills in STEM-related fields, and in particular a need to bridge the gap, pressures and mismatches between education training systems and labour market requirements. In line with the European Commission's STEM Education Strategic Plan: Skills for competitiveness and innovation, there is a need to strengthen STEM education and skills, widen participation in STEM, and improve the links between education, training and labour market needs.

In this context, the European Commission is placing growing emphasis on the development of applied and practice-oriented competences, cross-disciplinary skillsets, and the ability to translate research and theoretical knowledge into solutions in real-world settings. This implies not only strengthening foundational STEM disciplines but also strengthening the capacity of learners to apply STEM knowledge and skills in different educational, professional and societal contexts.

It also calls for approaches that connect STEM knowledge with complementary competences, including creativity, design, communication, collaboration, entrepreneurship, critical thinking, and human-centred and ethical approaches to problem-solving. Such competences can strengthen learners' ability to work across disciplinary boundaries, respond to complex challenges, and translate technical knowledge into solutions that are relevant to people, organisations, and society.

Against this background, EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction aims to strengthen Europe's STEM talent pipeline by facilitating access to STEM education and careers for learners at different stages of their educational and professional journeys. For the purposes of this Call, an induction activity is understood as a structured learning or engagement activity that introduces learners to STEM subjects, technologies, applications, skills or career pathways and supports their progression towards further STEM learning, training or employment. Induction activities may therefore range from introductory or exploratory activities that raise awareness and interest in STEM, to practical learning opportunities and more focused technical or skills development, depending on the needs and starting level of the target learners.

The Initiative supports the development of induction activities that promote inclusion, strengthen links between education and industry, and facilitate transitions into STEM learning pathways and employment.

To be part of this innovation journey, 28DIGITAL invites proposals for the EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction Call 2026: Building Future-Ready STEM Talent. The call will select up to 25 proposals aligned

with identified skills needs and regional economic contexts. The selected proposals will aim to increase participation in STEM education, improve alignment between education and labour market needs, and complement e education and training systems with support the development of more responsive and flexible learning opportunities.

3.2 Main requirements for applicants

3.2.1 Domains and Areas of Focus

Training activities supported under the Call are expected to address key STEM domains that are relevant to Europe's strategic priorities, while remaining accessible to learners at different levels. Based on the [ISCED](#) classification the domains include:

- Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics (ISCED 05)
- Information and Communication Technologies (ISCED 06)
- Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction (ISCED 07)

The Call may also support interdisciplinary STEM activities that combine knowledge, skills or applications from two or more of the above STEM domains, or that connect STEM knowledge with other fields, like health for example, provided that the proposed activity has a clear and substantive STEM component.

Applicants should clearly identify in their proposals the relevant STEM domain(s) and, where applicable, the corresponding ISCED field(s), and explain how the proposed activity addresses STEM knowledge, skills or competences.

Particular attention will be paid to induction activities that address strategic technologies and emerging application areas of European relevance. In line with the [Vision for the European Space Economy](#), projects may incorporate space-related applications and technologies, offering engaging contexts for developing STEM competences while supporting Europe's innovation and competitiveness objectives.

Across all STEM domains, projects are encouraged to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other emerging digital technologies where they enhance learning experiences, reflect current industry practice, or support the development of future-oriented digital competences. AI may be incorporated both as a subject of learning and as an enabling technology for personalised learning, simulations, adaptive learning, data analysis, or other pedagogically appropriate applications, while ensuring its responsible and ethical use.

Projects may also adapt complementary [STEAM approach](#) where these strengthen learning outcomes and real-world impact and in line with the principles set out in the [JRC guide on STEM and STEAM education and disciplinary integration](#). This approach puts an extra emphasis on incorporating perspectives, methods and practices from the arts and other creative disciplines, including creativity and design, where these contribute to strengthening learning outcomes and the application of STEM knowledge and skills to real-world challenges. In addition, induction activities may contribute to the development of transversal STEM competences, such as communication and collaboration, entrepreneurship, critical thinking, sustainability, ethics and human-centred problem-solving, including competences associated with an innovation mindset. These competences should complement the STEM focus of the induction activity rather than replace it.

3.2.2 Educational Formats

The Call adopts an open and flexible approach to the design and implementation of these activities, utilizing the minimum requirements as a supportive framework to ensure baseline consistency and quality across projects.

- Trainings can be delivered: online, offline, or blended.
- Trainings modes can be asynchronous, synchronous, or semi synchronous.

Applicants are therefore invited to propose solutions that are responsive to the needs of their target groups, regional contexts, and identified skills gaps.

Formats may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Modular and short-duration induction programmes, such as introductory courses
- Embedding STEM content within existing VET or higher education curricula and adapting them to regional or sectoral needs
- Industry challenge-based learning, including company-defined challenges, hackathons, design sprints, engineering competitions, prototype development, or interdisciplinary problem-solving activities addressing real-world industrial or societal challenges.
- Regional Industry–STEM Labs, through light and scalable formats such as lab-in-a-box solutions, robotics kits, mobile laboratories, maker activities, virtual laboratories, browser-based STEM challenges, etc.
- Transition and Re-induction programs: formats structured as targeted bridge courses, preparatory STEM modules, or career transition tracks.
- Platform-integrated training formats, delivered through online or blended learning environments, incorporating virtual laboratories, simulations, AI-supported learning tools, collaborative digital platforms, or self-paced learning modules.

- Projects can consider a wider range of methods, including online, in-person components or blended learning formats that can balance between scale and quality, ensuring meaningful learning outcomes while taking into account the outreach targets set.

3.2.3 Target Groups

The initiative places a primary focus on learners at ISCED Levels 3–5, with particular attention dedicated to Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathways. By prioritizing medium-level VET and short-cycle tertiary learners, the project aims to contribute to the EU STEM Education Strategic Plan targets on VET where at least 45% of students in initial VET are enrolled in STEM fields by 2030. Further guidance on the expected scope of training actions is provided in Annex 2 to this Call, which includes illustrative examples for each target education level.

In accordance with the EU STEM Education Strategic Plan, projects are expected to contribute to widening participation in STEM by actively engaging learners from groups whose STEM potential remains underrepresented or underserved. This includes but is not limited to: learners from rural areas, who are frequently underserved by traditional innovation hubs, learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, women and girls who are often underrepresented in traditionally male-dominated sectors, adult learners transitioning from declining economic sectors, or any other underrepresented group as identified in the national or sectoral context.

As an example of this commitment, the Initiative aim to reach 30% learners from RIS countries. Prioritizing these regions ensures that advanced STEM training and deep-tech knowledge extend beyond traditional innovation hubs. Funded projects directly build local technological capacity, connect regional talent to pan-European networks, and unlock the untapped economic potential of moderate and emerging innovator countries.

The initiative has also set a target to reach 40% women and girls trained. Women remain significantly underrepresented in Europe's advanced digital and deep-tech sectors. By actively meeting this target through inclusive marketing and accessible course design, funded projects help close the gender gap, tap into underutilized talent, and build a more diverse and competitive European workforce

Applicants are encouraged to use appropriate outreach, marketing, and stakeholder engagement approaches to identify and reach the target groups and, where relevant, to inform the design, scope, content, and delivery format of the proposed training activities.

3.2.4 Quality and Pedagogical Requirements

All funded training activities shall comply with the EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction core quality standard requirements, which provide the common pedagogical and quality framework for the Initiative: the minimum standards for course design, learner outcomes, competence development, assessment, certification, educator qualifications. These are presented in Annex 2 for reference.

Training activities should be of sufficient duration and intensity to enable learners to achieve the intended learning outcomes and competence development. While the appropriate duration will depend on the target group, ISCED level, delivery format, and training objectives, applicants should demonstrate that the proposed learning hours are proportionate to the expected outcomes. Supported courses are expected to comprise at least 10 hours of structured learning activities, including practical and applied components, where appropriate.

3.2.5 Language of training activities

Training activities may be delivered in English and/or in relevant local or regional languages, according to the target learners and the context in which the activities are implemented. Applicants are encouraged to use the language(s) that best support accessibility, learner engagement, and effective participation of the target groups.

For the purposes of monitoring, reporting, evaluation, and communication at Initiative level, the proposal and key project documentation shall be provided in English. This includes relevant deliverables, activity and programme descriptions, monitoring and reporting materials, and other documentation requested by EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction. Where training materials or outputs are produced in local or regional languages, applicants may be required to provide an English summary or equivalent documentation to facilitate monitoring and evaluation.

3.2.6 Scalability and Impact

Beyond the immediate delivery of training, the initiative places strong emphasis on scalability and long-term impact. Projects are expected to consider from the onset how their approaches can reach high targets of learners, how they can be sustained and scaled in other contexts. This may involve:

- development of reusable learning resources and tools
- use of digital platforms and blended learning approaches
- cooperation with national education and training authorities to integrate the STEM learning components into existing curricula or training programmes
- train-the-trainer models that enable wider deployment of the training

- partnerships and networks that support the uptake and replication of project results
- open-access dissemination of project outputs to maximise impact beyond the project duration

In terms of impact, applicants should demonstrate how their proposed training model contributes to the development of STEM talent pathways and supports learner progression beyond initial induction activities. Proposals should describe how learning outcomes, competence development, and assessment approaches are designed to support progression towards further education, employment, or innovation opportunities, in line with the EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction core quality standard requirements.

Training models should demonstrate strong links with industry and relevant ecosystem stakeholders, including through demand-driven design, collaboration with industry partners, and integration within regional innovation ecosystems.

3.3 Main requirements for project implementation

3.3.1 Project duration

Activities are expected to start by 1st April 2027, after the selection process has ended, and must be fully concluded by 31st December 2027.

3.3.2 Project implementation

All projects funded under the Call are expected to follow a structured implementation approach, consisting of two main phases: a design and development phase, followed by a deployment and validation phase.

Phase 1: Design and Development (3 months)

- Validation of industry needs and co-creation of the training program with businesses, SMEs and other industry partners
- Content development of in alignment with the EIT STEM Competence Framework, Learner Target Groups, Core quality standard requirements
- Development of Learner Monitoring and Assessment Materials
- Validation of the learner target group(s) identified in the proposal, followed by learner outreach, marketing, recruitment, organisational and logistical arrangements around enrolment
- Development of a Dissemination Plan

Quality check and transition to Phase 2

At the end of Phase 1 and no later than three months after the project start date (indicatively 30 June 2027), projects will submit their final education program overview. The program will undergo a quality check by the Quality Check (QC) team of the Initiative. The QC team assesses whether programmes meet the EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction core quality standard requirements and communicates the outcomes to 28DIGITAL. During the quality check, projects shall respond to requests for information or clarification within the timeframe indicated in each request. The outcome of the quality check will be shared with each project, indicating whether the programme: (i) meets the requirements; (ii) meets the requirements subject to minor adjustments; or (iii) requires revision and resubmission. Where adjustments or revisions are needed, projects will integrate them into ongoing and upcoming training activities within the agreed timeframe.

Phase 2: Deployment and Validation (6 months)

- Delivery of training activities
- Monitoring of learner participation, completion of study, assessment of learning outcomes
- Review of the training programme based on delivery experience, learner feedback and assessment results
- Exploration of sustainability/scalability options beyond funding (e.g. adoption in existing curricula, sponsorships or collaborations with businesses/industry/NGOs, other sources or future sources of funding).

3.3.3 Deliverables

Deliverable	Description
Final Education Programme and Implementation Package	The complete, industry-validated learning program (including course documentation, educator and facilitator guides, assessment tools, learner certificate template, paired with the final delivery plan and communication plans.
Programme Evaluation	A structured overview of the delivery of the induction programme, covering learner participation and completion rates; the achievement of intended learning outcomes (e.g. the share of learners achieving the learning outcomes) participant and industry

	feedback; the potential for learner progression towards further education, employment, entrepreneurship or innovation pathways.
--	---

3.3.4 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

KPI	KPI description	Minimum target expected
EITHE08.1 Participants in non-labelled education and training	Number of successful participants in EIT professional development courses, online training courses and other education/training activities delivered or in a process of delivery	1,200

Each project is expected to reach a minimum of 1,200 participants under KPI [EITHE08.1 Participants in Non-Labelled Programs](#). Applicants should propose a realistic, evidence-based target at or above this minimum, in line with the scope and format of the proposed activities.

Funded organisations are responsible for the recruitment and engagement of learners participating in the proposed training activities and should define appropriate outreach, communication, and marketing measures to achieve their target participation. Learner participation throughout the project should also be monitored to ensure the achievement of the targets set.

For EIT KPI reporting, funded projects shall collect and report participant data, including but not limited to country of citizenship, country of residence and gender, in accordance with the [EIT Impact Framework](#) and the KPI reporting methodology and guidance provided by 28DIGITAL. Data shall be submitted through the designated reporting platform and in the format specified by 28DIGITAL. Funded projects may also be asked to contribute to additional data collection at Initiative level.

Applicants are encouraged to consider the participation of learners from Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) countries as part of their proposed learner target group. Supporting participation from RIS countries contributes to the Initiative's objective of promoting a more inclusive and geographically balanced development of STEM talent across Europe. Where relevant to the proposed activities and target groups, applicants are encouraged to include the KPI EITHE08.2 – RIS EIT Participants from RIS among the project KPIs, and to explain how their activities contribute to RIS participation and how this will be monitored through the project KPIs.

Additionally, applicants should define custom indicators during the proposal stage. Depending on the nature of the project, these include learner enrolment and completion rates, achievement of learning outcomes, participation of women and girls and learners from RIS countries, stakeholder engagement, learner satisfaction, and potential of progression into further STEM education, training, or employment where feasible.

3.3.5 Monitoring and reporting

All projects selected for funding will be subject to a structured monitoring and reporting process to ensure effective implementation, accountability, and continuous quality improvement. Monitoring will assess both the progress of project implementation and the achievement of intended results, enabling the Initiative to evaluate the effectiveness of supported training models and identify good practices for future replication and scaling.

Monitoring will cover several aspects of project implementation, including, but not limited to:

- progress of planned activities, outputs, milestones, deliverables, and KPIs
- outcomes of the quality check, measures implemented and any follow-up actions
- learner engagement, progress towards the achievement of intended learning outcomes and competence development
- industry and stakeholder engagement, including collaboration with education providers, businesses, regional ecosystem partners, national education authorities.
- financial implementation and budget execution
- risk management and mitigation measures
- communication, dissemination, visibility, and compliance with EIT /EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction branding and co-branding requirements.

Projects are encouraged to use monitoring findings to identify implementation risks, adapt mitigation approaches where appropriate, and capture lessons learned throughout the implementation period. Where monitoring shows that the requirements of the Call or the Financial Support Agreement are not met, 28DIGITAL may apply the measures provided for in the Financial Support Agreement.

Final reporting will take place following the completion of project activities. Final reports should provide a comprehensive overview of project implementation and results, including:

- summary of the overall implementation
- achievement of planned deliverables, milestones, and KPIs;
- description of ecosystem engagement;
- sustainability and scaling measures planned beyond the funding period;
- lessons learned and recommendations for future implementation;

Selected Projects will submit the following Reports by the end of the funding period:

- Monitoring Report- overview of implementation progress, KPI achievement, risks, mitigation measures, and preliminary results (indicatively planned for July 2027)
- Final Report – assessment of project implementation, achievement of objectives and KPIs, lessons learned, and recommendations for future replication or scaling. (indicatively planned for December 2027-January 2028)
- Financial Report – detailed overview of eligible costs and financial implementation in accordance with the applicable funding requirements (indicatively planned for December 2027-February 2028)

Projects are expected to establish appropriate mechanisms from the outset and be able to collect both quantitative and qualitative evidence throughout implementation. A particular attention should be given to collecting and reporting data around KPIs in accordance with [EIT Impact Framework](#) where learner data will include data on country of citizenship and residence and gender.

3.3.6 Pathway from Pilot to Scale

EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction is implemented through a phased approach where a second Call is planned for 2027 to support the further uptake of successful training models. While progression to the 2027 Call will be subject to a separate competitive selection process, applicants are encouraged to consider the longer-term potential of their proposed induction models from the outset beyond this funding framework. This includes reflecting on impact and identifying potential pathways for replication and wider deployment across different learner groups, sectors, and regional contexts.

4. Financial aspects of the call

4.1 KIC funding

Scope of activities	Maximum indicative KIC funding	Indicative number of projects to be funded	Indicative max. annual EIT funding per project
STEM Training	2,000,000	Up to 25	Up to €80,000 per project

4.2 Payment arrangements

Payment type	Indicative timing	Share of funding	Link to Deliverable/Report
Pre-financing	May 2027	30%	-
Pre-financing	August 2027	20%	DEL Final Education Programme and Implementation Package Monitoring Report
Pre-financing	March 2028	20%	DEL Program Evaluation
Balance payment	August/September 2028	30%	Final Report Financial Report

Funding is paid in four instalments. Each payment is released once the linked deliverables or reports have been submitted and approved by 28DIGITAL and in accordance with the Financial Support Agreement and applicable EIT requirements. Dates are indicative. Final payment may be adjusted, withheld, or recovered where the project has not been implemented in accordance with the agreed conditions. Projects and their financial and supporting documentation may be subject to checks, reviews and audits by 28DIGITAL and/or the EIT and other authorised bodies, in accordance with the applicable legal and contractual framework.

4.3 Cost eligibility

Activities need to comply with the Horizon Europe and EIT requirements, which may be subject to changes.

Type of Financial Support: The financial support offered by 28DIGITAL is structured in the form of reimbursement of actual costs declared in the activity proposal budget. The funds are released in several tranches.

The proposal authors will have to provide detailed information with regards to the cost planning in the proposal form. The financial justification of the activity is detailed in the application form. The budget information needs to be precise and concrete, considering the requirements from the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement (MGA) and the 28DIGITAL Financial Support Agreement (FSA). These are key documents defining the general framework under which Activities will operate.

It is very important that the activity proposal assigns its budget to the correct cost categories, amongst the following:

- Personnel costs
- Sub-contracting costs
- Travel and subsistence
- Equipment
- Other goods, works and services
- Indirect costs. This is a flat rate of 25% calculated on the eligible direct costs (except volunteer's costs, subcontracting costs, financial support to third parties and exempted specific cost categories, if any).

Please note the following about the content on the 28DIGITAL submission system:

- Costs need to be allocated to one or more tasks. Tasks define how the work is broken down between partners and how much each part of the work costs. It is possible to model the budget of a Task based on planning assumptions, while the reporting will have to be based on actual costs, which cannot exceed the approved budget.
- Financial Support to Third Parties (or sub-granting) can be used to allocate budget to third parties. The sub-grantee selection process should be open, transparent and follow all applicable rules (as defined in the Model Grant Agreement). It is recommended to make a limited use of this cost category.

- Sub-contracting needs to be explicitly defined in the proposal and follow all applicable rules, especially regarding the value for money and avoidance of conflict of interest.
- Full Time Equivalents (FTE): We strongly recommend a commitment of at least 0.2 FTEs per partner and Task Leader/Contributor to ensure meaningful involvement and the allocation of enough capacity to the specific task.

As set out in Art. 20 of the HE MGA, each beneficiary must keep appropriate and sufficient evidence to prove the eligibility of all the costs declared, proper implementation of the action and compliance with all the other obligations under the Grant Agreement. The evidence must be verifiable, auditable and available. It must be correctly archived for the duration of the project indicated in the Grant Agreement. In general, the evidence must be kept for at least 5 years after final payment or longer if there are ongoing procedures (audits, investigations, litigation, etc.).

5. Call criteria

Following the deadline for submission, the admissibility, eligibility, exclusion and selection criteria checks will be performed for each proposal in line with the following criteria.

5.1 Admissibility

- Applications must be submitted before the call deadline (see Chapter 2 above).
- Applications must be submitted using the forms provided inside the electronic submission system (see Chapter 2 above).
- Applications must be complete and contain all parts and mandatory annexes and supporting documents. The structure and presentation must correspond to the instructions given in the forms.
- Applications must be readable, accessible and printable.

Where AI tools or systems are used in the design or delivery of the proposed activities, applicants are required to submit a declaration confirming that their use complies with the applicable requirements of Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 (Artificial Intelligence Act).

Any proposals submitted after the deadline will be inadmissible. Only proposals satisfying all the admissibility criteria shall pass on to the eligibility criteria assessment stage.

5.2 Eligibility

Following the admissibility check, only proposals complying with the following conditions will be considered eligible for further evaluation.

5.2.1 Entities eligible to participate

This is an open call for proposals. Participation is not restricted to members of the 28DIGITAL KIC Partnership, and membership of, or collaboration with, an existing KIC partner is not a condition for applying or for receiving funding. Members and non-members of the KIC Partnership are eligible under the same conditions and all proposals are evaluated according to the same criteria, and all members of the KIC Partnership have equal opportunity to participate.

Any legal entity, regardless of its place of establishment, including legal entities from non-associated third countries is eligible to participate, provided that the conditions laid down in the Horizon Europe Regulation have been met (e.g. the entity is not under EU sanction), along with any other conditions laid down in the specific call/topic.

For this call, a 'legal entity' means any legal person created and recognised as such under national law, EU law or international law, which has legal personality and which may, acting in its own name, exercise rights and be subject to obligations, or an entity without legal personality.

5.2.2 Eligibility for funding

In accordance with the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2025¹, in order to be **eligible for funding**, the **applicant must be established in one of the eligible countries**, i.e.:

- the Member States of the European Union, including their outermost regions;
- the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) linked to the Member States²;
- countries associated to Horizon Europe³;

¹https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2025/wp-14-general-annexes_horizon-2025_en.pdf

² Entities from Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) are eligible for funding under the same conditions as entities from the Member States to which the OCT in question is linked. See the Horizon Europe Programme Guide on the portal for a complete list of OCTs.

³ Please see the Horizon Europe Programme Guide on the Funding and Tenders Portal for up-to-date information on the current list of and the position for Associated Countries:

- certain low- and middle-income countries⁴.

Legal entities, which are established in countries not listed above will be eligible for funding if their participation is considered essential for implementing the action by the EIT.

Affiliated entities — Affiliated entities are eligible for funding if they are established in one of the countries listed above, or in a country identified in the call.

Associated partners — Entities not eligible for funding (and therefore not able to participate as beneficiaries) may participate as associated partners.

Only proposals satisfying all the eligibility criteria shall pass on to the selection and evaluation stages.

5.2.3 Consortium composition

Only legal entities forming a consortium are eligible to participate in the actions provided that the consortium includes, as beneficiaries:

- at least one education provider (schools, school networks, VET provider networks, large training providers, NGOs, EdTech, STEM-linked universities and technical universities, STEM academies, bootcamps, summer schools, educator networks, student and talent networks, certification bodies, and professional training providers)
- at least one business or industry partner (includes large enterprises, startups and scaleups, industry associations / clusters, digital innovation hubs, research centers, innovation labs, incubators, corporate foundations, and sectoral or professional associations connected to STEM and innovation ecosystems).

Projects are also encouraged to include:

- regional/public actors: through which the ecosystem can provide long term transitions
- partners from another region or country for transnational implementation if and where feasible

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/programme-guide_horizon_en.pdf

⁴ See the Horizon Europe Programme Guide on the Funding and Tenders Portal for a complete list of these countries. [List of participating countries in Horizon Europe](#).

Training and induction activities should be designed to support adaptability, knowledge transfer, and continued engagement, including through multiplier networks, institutional cooperation, industry engagement, and opportunities for learners to further develop their skills through education, innovation, and employment.

5.2.4 EU restrictions on participation

- **EU restrictive measures** — Entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)⁵ as well as Article 75 TFEU⁶, are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

Special rules also apply to entities covered by Commission Guidelines No 2013/C 205/0522⁷.

- **Legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine** — Given the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the involvement of Belarus, there is currently no appropriate context allowing the implementation of the actions foreseen in this programme with legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine. Therefore, even where such entities are not subject to EU restrictive measures, such legal entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity. This includes participation as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any). Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis for justified reasons.

With specific regard to measures addressed to Russia, following the adoption of the Council Regulation (EU) 2024/1745 of 24 June 2024⁸ (amending Council Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 of 31 July 2014) concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine, legal entities established outside Russia but whose proprietary rights are

⁵ Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#)

⁶ Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#)

⁷ Commission guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#) on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11)

⁸ OJ L 229, 31.7.2014, p. 1-11

directly or indirectly owned for more than 50% by a legal person, entity or body established in Russia are also not eligible to participate in any capacity.

- **Measures for the protection of the Union budget against breaches of the principles of the rule of law in Hungary** — Following the [Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/2506](#), as of 15 December 2022, no legal commitments can be entered into with Hungarian public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain. Affected entities may continue to apply to calls for proposals and can participate without receiving EU funding, as associated partners, if allowed by the call conditions. However, as long as the Council measures are not lifted, such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties, etc.). In case of multi-beneficiary grant calls, applicants will be invited to remove or replace that entity in any funded role and/or to change its status into associated partner. Tasks and budget may be redistributed accordingly.
- **Restrictions for the protection of European communication networks** — The protection of European communication networks has been identified as an important security interest of the Union and its Member States⁹. For further information, please refer to the Horizon Europe, Work Programme 2025, General Annexes, B – Eligibility on page 14¹⁰.

5.3 Exclusion criteria

Applicants will be excluded from participation in the Call and from the award if they are in one of the situations referred to in Article 138(1) of the EU Financial Regulation. Applicants that are subject to EU administrative sanctions (i.e. exclusion) or are in one of the following exclusion situations that bar them from receiving EU grants can NOT participate:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
- they are in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);

⁹ European Council conclusions of 1 and 2 October 2020 (EUCO 13/20), point 11; Council Conclusions on the significance of 5G to the European Economy and the need to mitigate security risks linked to 5G, 14517/19.

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2025/wp-14-general-annexes_horizon-2025_en.pdf

- they are guilty of grave professional misconduct (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- they are guilty of fraud, corruption, having links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- they have shown significant deficiencies in complying with their main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- they are guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No 2988/9534 (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant); or
- they have created under a different jurisdiction an entity with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).
- have misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or have failed to supply that information; or
- were previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equality of treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise.

As evidence, the applicants (i.e. the Coordinator and all the proposed partners participating in the applicant consortium) will have to submit a **declaration of honour on exclusion criteria and absence of conflict of interest**. Failure to provide adequate documentation may result in the exclusion of the applicants concerned.

Successful applicants may go through the legal entity validation process of the **Partners Validation Service (PVS) of the KICs (i.e. a shared service led by EIT Urban Mobility KIC)**. The Partners Validation Service will request registration documents and a signed Declaration of Honour from the successful

applicant. The validation may also include a check of the successful applicants by the EIT in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) of the European Commission.

5.4 Selection criteria

5.4.1 Financial capacity criteria

Applicants must have stable and sufficient resources to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. In accordance with Article 27 of the Horizon Europe Regulation, the financial capacity shall be verified for the coordinator if the requested funding is equal or greater than EUR 500 000. If there are grounds to doubt the financial capacity of an applicant, the KIC shall also verify the financial capacity of the applicant, or of the coordinator even where the requested funding is below the threshold referred to above.

If requested by the KIC, successful applicants will go through the financial capacity check process of the **Partners Validation Service of the KICs (i.e. a shared service led by EIT Urban Mobility KIC)**.

By submitting the proposals, the applicants confirm that they have stable and sufficient financial resources to successfully implement the proposals in which they participate.

If an applicant is participating in several projects, it must have sufficient financial capacity to implement them in parallel.

At the proposal submission stage, the coordinator will be asked to confirm that the organisation has carried out a self-check of the financial capacity of the organisation through the financial self-check tool¹¹ or has been covered by a financial viability check for an EU project for the last closed financial year.

If, after the financial capacity check, a coordinator's/applicant's financial capacity is considered not satisfactory, further information may be required and further measure(s) may be applied by the KIC:

- an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities;
- the financial capacity of the applicant may be structurally guaranteed by another legal entity/ies;
- prefinancing paid in instalments;
- the KIC may propose no prefinancing;
- the activities may be subject to additional monitoring and reporting based on an action plan;

¹¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/lfv/lfvSimulation.do>

- the KIC may request that the applicant is replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.
- the KIC may request that the applicant is replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

5.4.2 Operational capacity criteria

Applicants must have the experience, the know-how, qualifications and resources to successfully implement their tasks in the project and contribute their share (including, when appropriate, sufficient experience in EU/transnational projects of comparable size/in the subject matter of the call, requirements for the team). The operational capacity assessment is based on the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including their operational resources (human, technical and other).

By submitting the proposals, the applicants confirm that they have the experience, know-how, qualifications and operational resources (human, technical and other) to successfully implement the proposals.

If an applicant is participating in several projects, it must have sufficient operational capacity to implement them in parallel.

If, in case of doubt, additional documents may be requested by the KIC to confirm the operational capacity of the applicants:

- information on the staffing situation of the applicant;
- profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the activities,
- description of the participants in project;
- activity reports of last year(s);
- information and list of other projects implemented.

5.5 Award criteria

5.5.1 Award criteria, subcriteria and maximum scores

The calls shall indicate the following award criteria:

- (a) Excellence
- (b) Impact
- (c) Quality and efficiency of the implementation
- (d) Strategic fit

External Experts Award Criteria

a) Excellence	Maximum score
Alignment with the objectives of EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction and the specific objectives of the Call, alignment with the target-group priorities of the Call, with particular attention to learners at ISCED Levels 3–5 and Vocational Education and Training (VET).	5
Quality and relevance of the proposed learning design, including the alignment of the curriculum design, training format and delivery methods with the intended learning outcomes, and integration of industry-relevant learning experiences.	5
Integration of diversity, inclusion and gender considerations into the design and delivery of activities (e.g. ensuring relevance, accessibility, and recruitment of learners from diverse socio-economic, educational, and professional backgrounds).	5
Minimum Required Score	6

b) Impact	Maximum score
Potential of the proposed induction activities to contribute to increase interest in STEM and support their progression towards further further STEM education, career , or innovation opportunities.	5
The potential for the proposed training to be replicated, transferred, or scaled beyond the project duration.	5
Minimum Required Score	4

c) Quality and efficiency of the implementation	Maximum score
Quality and feasibility of the implementation plan, including the work plan, allocation of responsibilities, KPIs, and budget.	5

Quality of the proposed learner engagement, outreach, and recruitment strategy, including the identification and understanding of target group(s), use of appropriate marketing and communication approaches, and measures to reach, engage, and retain learners, including, where relevant, groups underrepresented in STEM pathways.	5
Quality of the consortium composition and the expertise of the project team to ensure successful implementation of the proposed activities.	5
Minimum Required Score	6

d) Strategic fit	Maximum score
Contribution to the geographical coverage of the Initiative and the attainment of RIS objectives, including the involvement of learners and organisations from RIS countries.	5
Focus on strategic technologies and emerging application areas of European relevance like space-related applications or technologies and integration of Artificial Intelligence.	5

Each sub-criterion will be scored from 0 (Insufficient) to 5 (Excellent):

- 0 – Insufficient: The criterion is not addressed or is addressed in a very limited manner.
- 1 – Poor: The criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious weaknesses.
- 2 – Fair: The application broadly addresses the criterion but there are significant weaknesses.
- 3 – Good: The application addresses the criterion well but some shortcomings are present.
- 4 – Very Good: The application addresses the criterion very well with minor shortcomings.
- 5 – Excellent: The application successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion.

5.5.2 Relative weight of the award criteria

Criterion	Relative weight
a) Excellence	30%
b) Impact	30%
c) Quality and efficiency of the implementation	30%
d) Strategic fit	10%
Total points	100%

Proposals are ranked on the basis of a final score (maximum 100 points), calculated by applying the relative weights to the scores obtained under each criterion:

Final score = (Excellence score / 15 × 30) + (Impact score / 10 × 30) + (Implementation score / 15 × 30) + (Strategic fit score / 10 × 10).

To pass the expert evaluation, a proposal must reach the minimum score for each of criteria (a), (b) and (c). The thresholds in sections 5.5.1 apply to the unweighted scores.

6. Evaluation procedure

6.1 Evaluation of proposals

6.1.1 Evaluation Process

The evaluation and selection procedure comprises the following stages:

Experts Review: Submitted proposals are assessed by independent external experts. Each expert individually evaluates each proposal following specific evaluation criteria and provides comments supporting their assessment, recommendations to the Review Gate, as well as feedback to the applicants.

Review Gate: Experts assigned to the same proposals form an Evaluation Panel and discuss each proposal based on their own individual assessments, following the requirements and guidelines of this document. The outcome is a consensus evaluation report that integrates and supersedes individual assessments.

Selection Committee: A Selection Committee composed of 28DIGITAL staff reviews the consensus evaluation reports to ensure the integrity and consistency of the process, and establishes the final ranking of proposals that reach all thresholds.

Award Decision: On the basis of this ranking, and subject to the available budget, the Management Committee of 28DIGITAL takes the award decision, selecting proposals for funding in ranking order, placing others on the reserve list, or rejecting them. The Management Committee may also request changes to proposals selected for funding (e.g. budget adjustments or changes to activity descriptions).

Overview of the review process



6.1.2 Results of the evaluation: award, reserve list

A reserve list of proposals will be defined based on the evaluation score and ranking. The duration of validity of the list will be three months after the date of the award decision. The purpose of the reserve list is to maintain a pool of high-quality projects that can be funded in the event that higher-ranked proposals decline their grant, fail to clear the contract signature stage, or if additional budget becomes available during the validity period. Applicants on the reserve list will be formally notified via email if their project is reconsidered for funding, following their score and the order of the ranking list.

6.2 Communication of evaluation results to applicants

6.2.1 Communication of evaluation results

Following the award decision, all applicants will be informed of the result in via the Proposal Submission System or email. All applicants will receive their assessment, including their score.

In case an applicant requests further clarification regarding the evaluation result, it may contact the KIC by email. Such requests will be replied within 15 days (this deadline may be extended by the KIC with due justification).

Successful proposals will be invited to the financial support agreement preparation stage/onboarding, the other proposals will be put on the reserve list or rejected.

6.2.2 Requirements for selected proposals

If the proposal is selected, the communication on the evaluation results may include a set of recommendations/conditions as a result of the outcome of the evaluation. These requirements may not entail a substantial modification of the proposal.

The communication will establish a clear and non-negotiable deadline for the submission of the adjusted proposals.

Should all conditions be met within the established deadline, 28DIGITAL will initiate the financial support agreement preparation process/onboarding (e.g. legal entity validation, signature of Declaration of honour, if not yet provided, financial capacity check, if relevant).

If the applicant fails to comply with the provided recommendations/conditions or does not respond in the time allocated, the 28DIGITAL reserves the right to withdraw the conditional notification. Should this occur, the next highest-ranked proposal will be contacted following the ranking list.

6.3 Standstill period

28DIGITAL is requested to indicate the mandatory minimum time period between the communication of the results of the evaluation and the signature of the financial support agreements, which shall not be less than 21 days counting from the day after dispatch of the communication of results. This is in accordance with the standards for transparency, fairness, and applicant redress defined under Article 6.2.D.1 (Financial Support to Third Parties) and program-specific provisions in Annex 5 of the [EU Grants AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

6.4 Publication of recipients of funds annually

28DIGITAL shall make available (on a dedicated page on its website) information on recipients of funds (only legal persons or entities without a legal personality) financed from the EIT budget, no later than 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the funds were legally committed.

The following information shall be published, having due regard for the requirements of confidentiality and security, in particular the protection of personal data:

- (a) the recipient's full legal name and the country where it is established;
- (b) the amount committed and, in case of a commitment with multiple recipients, the breakdown of this amount per recipient where available;
- (c) subject of grant or contract.

6.5 Appeal process

28DIGITAL will address any complaints concerning the conduct and the outcome of the call process. Complaints shall be addressed to proposal_support@28digital.eu within 10 business days since the communication of results.

In accordance with Article 30 of the Horizon Europe Regulation, an applicant may request an evaluation review if it considers that the applicable evaluation procedure has not been correctly applied to its proposal. Only the procedural aspects of an evaluation may be the subject of a request for an evaluation review. The evaluation of the merits of a proposal shall not be the subject of an evaluation review. Applicants must base their complaint on the information included in the letter addressed to them stating the grounds on which the decision was taken, possibly with reference to the conditions and criteria laid down in the Call for Proposals.

7. Other terms and conditions

7.1 Acceptance of the call conditions

All information related to the Call, including any amendments, clarification will be published on the Calls and Tenders page of the 28DIGITAL website which is the official source of information for the Call. Applicants are advised to consult the call page regularly.

28DIGITAL may declare the call unsuccessful in case no applications are received, if the applications do not meet the admissibility, eligibility, exclusion and selection criteria, or if none of the applications reach the thresholds laid down in this call text.

By submitting the application form, the applicant agrees to the present call conditions. Applicants agree that they have no legal entitlement to funding.

7.2 Cancellation of the call

28DIGITAL reserves the right to cancel the call at any time before the signature of the Financial Support Agreement(s) without the obligation to compensate applicants, in particular where its objectives can no longer be met, provided that the applicants are informed in a transparent manner in writing as follows:

- if the cancellation takes place before that award: on the call page of 28DIGITAL website,
- if the cancellation takes place following the communication of the results to the applicants, during the standstill period, or anytime before the signature of the Financial Support Agreement: in writing directly to the selected applicants.

7.3 Data protection

28DIGITAL ensures that any processing of personal data shall be performed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016, on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and in accordance with Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation). As a data subject, you have the right of access, the right to rectification, the right to erasure, the right to restrict processing, the right to data portability, the right to object, and the right not to be subject to a decision based solely on automated processing. If you have a question about personal data processing or want to exercise your data subject rights, you can contact our Data Protection Officer at privacy@28DIGITAL.eu.

The collected personal data will be used solely for the evaluation of the applications and the conduct of the call process. The data controller is the Education Team handling the Call for Proposals.

Personal data will be deleted 5 years after the announcement of the results of the call in case of unsuccessful applications and 7 years for successful applicants.

By submitting your application to this call, you consent that 28DIGITAL will collect, transfer, process, store, and delete your data in accordance with the aforementioned conditions.

For more information on the processing of your personal data, please consult the privacy statement of 28DIGITAL at: <https://28DIGITAL.eu/legal-notice>.

7.4 Confidentiality

28DIGITAL undertakes to use any confidential information shared by the applicants solely for the purposes of the evaluation process.

Confidential information shall mean data and/or information (in any form) that is proprietary to, or possessed by, the applicants and not generally known to the public, or that has not yet been revealed whether in tangible or intangible form, that is identified as confidential in writing or when disclosed orally.

Confidential information included in the application form must be expressly labelled by the applicant as such in the form. As regards confidential information expressly labelled as such in the call process, 28DIGITAL undertakes to (i) not disclose them in any way and any form, without the prior written authorization of the applicant; and (ii) not to use them for purposes other than those strictly necessary for participation in the call.

Confidential information may be shared among 28DIGITAL and its subsidiaries (e.g. KIC Co-Location Centres) solely for the purposes of the call process. 28DIGITAL undertakes to impose this confidentiality obligation on its employees and the employees of its subsidiaries and its collaborators, as well as on independent experts and all subjects who, by virtue of participating in the conduct of the call, including as members of the Evaluation Committee, may have access to such confidential data and information.

The applicants agree that data and information regarding the selected projects' implementation (e.g. success stories) not labelled as confidential may be disclosed in connection with the activities of 28DIGITAL.

7.5 Avoidance of conflict of interest

28DIGITAL is committed to ensure the avoidance of conflict of interest (regarding all actors) and comply with the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and sound financial management.

Measures to avoid potential Conflict of Interest or unequal treatment of applicants are ensured including through appropriate conflict of interest declaration and assessment process, established written communication channels and independent and fair complaints/redress procedures.

In case an applicant becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest affecting the conduct of the call process, it shall notify the 28DIGITAL of the conflict of interest without any delay.

7.6 Ethics and values

The proposal must comply with:

- ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity) and
- applicable EU, international and national law, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Supplementary Protocols.

No financial support/EIT funding can be granted, within or outside the EU, for activities that are prohibited in all Member States. No financial support/EIT funding can be granted in a Member State for an activity which is forbidden in that Member State.

Please refer to the financial support agreement for further requirements.

7.7 Intellectual property rights

Applicants retain full and exclusive ownership of their prior information and intellectual property rights. By submitting their application, applicants confirm that they own or lawfully hold, and have secured or will secure in due time, all rights and permissions necessary to use all elements of the innovative product or service included in their application, or that they will take appropriate measures to secure and protect such rights during the project. Applicants agree to indemnify and hold harmless 28DIGITAL, the EIT, and/or any assignee or affiliate from any third-party allegations or claims of intellectual property rights infringement by the product or service of applicants. Applicants shall have the right to further develop, use and license their intellectual property rights for creating, making, marketing, and distributing products, services, and technology. Applicants agree to respect the IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) Rules (Article 16) of the [Model Grant Agreement](#) and Article 10 of the Financial Support Agreement (Common Subgrant Agreement Model).

7.8 Withdrawal of the funding – Recovery of undue amounts

28DIGITAL may withdraw the funding after its award and recover all payments made in line with the provisions of the Financial Support Agreement (Article 7.4.), including in the following cases:

- in case the applicant committed substantial errors, irregularities or fraud;

- in case the applicant committed serious breach of obligations under the Financial Support Agreement or during its award (including non-compliance with the call conditions, submission of false information, failure to provide required information, etc.)
- it is established that the awarded applicants were not eligible or should have been excluded.

7.9 Checks, reviews, audits and investigations

28DIGITAL IVZW retains the right to initiate checks, reviews and audit on an applicant that has been awarded funding, in order to verify compliance with the requirements of the call conditions and of the legal and contractual framework referred to above.

28DIGITAL IVZW may request any information and data from applicants that have been awarded funding for 5 years after completion for these purposes, as well as in relation to monitoring by the EIT.

In accordance with the Grant Agreement between the EIT and the KIC as well as the Financial Support Agreement, the EIT and/or the Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and the Court of Auditors may carry out checks, reviews, audits and investigations in relation to the call and the implementation of the projects.

7.10 Communication, dissemination and visibility

Funded projects shall comply with the communication, dissemination and visibility obligations set out in Article 17 of the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement, as reflected in the Financial Support Agreement. In particular, projects shall promote the project and its results, and ensure that the support received is acknowledged in all communication and dissemination activities, publications, training materials, events, and any infrastructure, equipment or major results funded under the Call.

To ensure a consistent visual identity across the Initiative, funded projects shall apply the EIT STEM Tech Talent - Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Framework (2026-2028) throughout implementation. The Guidelines will set out, among others, the use of the EIT STEM Talent logo and its variations, the EU emblem and funding statement, the required acknowledgement and disclaimer texts, as well as the colours, typography and imagery of the Initiative. They will be made available to selected projects before the start of the projects, together with the related templates and visual assets.

7.11 Applicable law

The present call is governed by the applicable European Union legal framework (i.e. in particular the [EIT Regulation](#)¹², the [EU Financial Regulation](#)¹³, the [Horizon Europe Regulation](#)¹⁴), supplemented if necessary by the national law of Belgium.

The applicants agree to observe the obligations outlined in the Memorandum of Cooperation and the Grant Agreement signed between the EIT and 28DIGITAL. Applicants agree to comply with the terms of the Model Financial Support Agreement between successful applicants and 28DIGITAL, available at 28DIGITAL website.

7.12 Settlement of disputes

All disputes arising out of or in connection with this Agreement, which cannot be solved amicably, shall be finally settled before the courts of Brussels.

¹² Regulation (EU) 2021/819

¹³ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509

¹⁴ Regulation (EU) 2021/695

Annex 1 Timeline

Action	Date
Published Submission system opens	14 th October 2026
Info Session	26 th October 2026
Info Session	19 th November 2026
Proposal Submission closes	14 th December 2026, 17:00 CET
Feedback to selected/rejected activities	12 th February 2027
Standstill period	12 th February 2027-12 th March
Appeal window (10 business days)	12 th February-25 th February 2027
Assessment of appeals and feedback to applicants	12 th February 2027-3 rd March 2027
Proposal adjustments window (5 business days)	12 th February 2027-18 th February 2027
Activities start	1 st April 2027

Annex 2: Core quality standard requirements

The learner journey

Training is not an end in itself but one step in a longer talent development pipeline: induction activities introduce learners to STEM, help them build initial competences, and support their next steps towards further STEM learning, training or employment. This annex aims to set core quality standard requirements across nine stages of the induction learner journey, from before a course starts to after it ends, as summarised below.

Stage of the learner journey	What it covers
1. Outreach and recruitment	How learners find out about the course and how they are recruited
2. Entry and onboarding	Entry requirements, inclusive access, and information shared with learners before committing
3. Programme design	Curriculum/programme outline, STEM content and learning hours, aligned to the profile of the target group and to the EQF level of the expected learning outcomes
4. Delivery	What actually happens in the room or online, and who facilitates the learning activity and who contributes
5. Assessment	How learners demonstrate they have achieved the intended learning outcomes
6. Certification	What learners receive on successful completion, and what it does and does not represent
7. Progression and transition	Enabling learners to envision and explore possible next steps in STEM education, employment or innovation pathways after the course
8. Learner support, wellbeing and safeguarding	Protections for learners, including under-18 learners where applicable and data protection
9. Feedback, complaints and appeals	How a learner or other party can raise a concern, and what happens to it

1.Outreach and recruitment

The standard: Projects must identify the specific participation, access or skills gap the activity addresses and the learner group(s) concerned, and must demonstrate that its outreach and recruitment actively reaches and engages learners from diverse background including those underrepresented in STEM, rather than merely leaving participation open to them.

The Initiative sets a combined ambition across both Calls of 30% of learners from RIS (Regional Innovation Scheme) countries and 40% women and girls trained, and a project's recruitment approach should be able to show how it contributes to these, not simply record the outcome after the fact.

Projects should also identify the diverse backgrounds that are relevant in their specific context and explain how their outreach and recruitment approach will reach and engage these groups. This is intentionally a broader and more open category and may include, for example, learners from rural or remote areas, disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, minority or migrant communities, or other groups facing barriers to participation in STEM.

Evidence expected: a description of the target audience is specific enough to be clearly identifiable , rather than relying on a broad category as 'students, professionals, industry'. Projects should also identify the outreach and recruitment channels used to reach the learner group including those from diverse or underrepresented backgrounds. Where places are limited, projects should apply a fair and documented method for determining participation. Where formal entry requirements apply, the evidence should demonstrate alternative routes of entry are available for candidates who do not formally meet them but could reasonably succeed, for example through relevant prior experience.

2.Entry and onboarding

The standard: prospective learners must receive clear, accurate information before they commit. This should include the intended education level (expressed as ISCED level) of the target group, any entry requirements, the expected time commitment, the delivery format, and what learners will receive on completion, and how to raise a concern or seek support.

Where a course targets learners at a specific ISCED level defined in the Call for proposals, e.g. upper secondary (ISCED 3), post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4), short-cycle tertiary or higher VET (ISCED 5), bachelor's or master's level (ISCED 6 and 7), or adult and lifelong learning, projects should verify during onboarding that enrolled learners fall within that group or explain the exception.

Evidence expected: onboarding materials or joining instructions provided to learners, together with a record of how entry requirements were checked, including any cases where an alternative route of entry was used.

3. Programme design

3.1 STEM Content

The course content must fall within, or draw substantively on, at least one of the three ISCED-anchored technical fields: natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (ISCED 05); information and communication technologies (ISCED 06); or engineering, manufacturing and construction (ISCED 07), or relevant interdisciplinary fields, such as health where there is a clear STEM component. Basic digital literacy alone, such as general office software or everyday device use, does not on its own meet this standard.

3.2 Learning Hours

Every course must comprise a minimum of 10 hours of structured learning. There is no fixed upper limit. The appropriate duration above this minimum should reflect the target group, ISCED level, delivery format and training objectives, and the level and complexity of the intended learning outcomes. The application should justify the proposed hours on this basis, rather than treating 10 hours as a default or a target to sit at rather than a minimum to clear.

3.3 Level and competence architecture

Course content should be pitched at a level appropriate to the identified target group, and should be designed to develop competence across the three dimensions of the EIT STEM Competence Framework:

- conceptual foundations - the knowledge component,
- procedural application - the practical, tool- and method-based skills component, and
- innovation mindset - the transversal, interdisciplinary and entrepreneurial component.

The three dimensions do not need to be weighted equally, but the course should demonstrate how each is addressed. A course confined entirely to conceptual content would not, on its own, reflect the Initiative's definition of STEM competence.

3.4 Co-design and industry relevance

Consistent with the Initiative's requirement for training to be demand-driven, co-created with industry, and embedded in a regional innovation ecosystem, programme design should demonstrate how industry input has shaped the course. This may include defining the problem or skills gap addressed, contributing to content or practical challenges, providing real-world problems or datasets, or reviewing and validating the skills taught. Merely naming an industry or business partner is not sufficient.

3.5 Provenance of the course

Projects must feature a structured learning programme with defined curriculum, delivery and assessment. An unstructured event or showcase does not qualify.

Evidence expected (covering the five parts above): a curriculum or course outline setting out content, structure, learning hours and the STEM domain(s) addressed, the intended learning outcomes expressed using concrete, assessable verbs such as:

1. Explain or identify for knowledge
2. Apply, design, assess, produce for skills
3. For innovation mindset:
 - Interdisciplinary synthesis: integrate, combine, connect, compare, synthesise, apply across disciplines;
 - Creative and critical thinking: analyse, question, evaluate, distinguish, justify, generate, adapt, revise, propose alternatives;
 - Resilience and iterative design: test, evaluate, interpret, revise, iterate, refine, troubleshoot, improve;
 - Human-centred design, ethics and sustainability: identify stakeholder needs, assess impacts, evaluate trade-offs, apply ethical principles, justify design choices, incorporate user feedback, propose sustainable solutions;
 - Entrepreneurial mindset: identify opportunities, formulate a value proposition, assess feasibility, prioritise resources, validate assumptions, evaluate risks, develop an implementation approach, mobilise resources, pitch or present a solution;

- Collaboration, responsibility and autonomy: collaborate, communicate, negotiate, coordinate, contribute, give and integrate feedback, allocate responsibilities, make decisions, monitor progress, evaluate performance, supervise and improve work.

4.Delivery

The standard: the delivery should provide learners with meaningful opportunities to apply, practice, discuss, create, test or solve, rather than relying predominantly on passive listening, consistent with the Initiative's expectation of active, experiential and challenge-based learning.

The delivery format (in-person, online or blended) should be chosen because it best serves the learning outcomes and enables effective participation by the target group, including, where relevant, learners in rural, remote or otherwise less accessible locations. All those delivering or contributing to the course, including external industry contributors, should have expertise relevant to their role and be briefed on the intended learning outcomes and course design. Their contribution should support those outcomes and form an integrated part of the learning experience, rather than consist on stand-alone and unstructured presentation of their own material.

Evidence expected: a course programme or timetable of the learner journey and the main activities, an indication of the balance between direct teaching and active, independent or applied learning, and a description of the profiles and relevant expertise of those delivering or contributing to the course (named individuals are not required).

5.Assessment

The standard: every course must include a summative assessment and a clear threshold for successful completion that provide evidence that the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Assessment should be appropriate to the type of learning outcome being tested. Attendance or participation alone does not demonstrate that an outcome has been achieved and cannot substitute for assessment, although it may sit alongside it.

Evidence expected: for each stated learning outcome, a description of the assessment method through which achievement will be demonstrated, together with or clear assessment criteria defining the standard for successful performance. A single well-designed assessment task may assess several learning outcomes at once.

6.Certification

A learner who successfully completes the course must receive a verifiable certificate, credential or other format of achievement. This may be issued digitally, for example as a digital badge or credential, or may contribute to ECTS credits or a wider qualification. It does not need to constitute a full academic award on its own.

The Initiative names EU-wide micro-credentials for skills portability as a strategic direction. Where a digital credential is issued, it should therefore be designed to be portable and verifiable, for example through a stated issuing standard, rather than being a bare PDF with no means of verification.

The standard : The certificate or credential, and any accompanying claims made about it, must accurately reflect the learning outcomes that were assessed. A certificate should not imply a level of qualification, accreditation or professional recognition that has not in fact been granted.

Evidence expected: a specimen or template of the certificate or credential to be issued (ref. Section 3.3.3 of the Call Guidelines), together with a brief description of the conditions for award and, where relevant, how the credential can be verified.

7.Progression and transition

The standard: from the design stage, the proposal should explain how the course could help learners enter, progress within, or re-enter STEM education, future training, employment or other innovation pathways. Where relevant, learners should receive information, links or contacts that help them explore possible next steps. This reflects the Initiative's aim of strengthening the STEM talent pipeline, with induction activities serving as a starting point, that sparks interest and builds competences learners can return to and build on.

Evidence expected: a short explanation of the possible next steps for the target learner group, and how the course helps learners explore them, for example through career guidance, information on further study or training options, exposure to STEM careers and entrepreneurship, links to internships or work-based learning, or referrals to relevant support services and ecosystem opportunities.

8.Learner support, wellbeing and safeguarding

The standard: learners should have access to appropriate support throughout the course, including clear information on where to seek help with learning, participation or wellbeing concerns. Where activities involve learners under -18, appropriate safeguarding arrangements must be in place. For reporting purposes learner personal data must be collected, stored and used in accordance with the

requirements of GDPR, the EIT Impact Framework 2022–2027 or additional data requested at Initiative level.

Evidence expected: reflecting on the learner support arrangements during the course; where learners under 18 are involved, a description of the safeguarding arrangements in place; and confirmation that learner personal data is handled in line with GDPR.

9.Feedback

The standard: the application should describe a mechanism for gathering feedback from learners and, where relevant, from contributors and organisers, together with a process for reviewing that feedback and identifying improvements. Learners and other relevant parties should also have a route for raising concerns or complaints about the course or its delivery.

Evidence expected: description on how learner feedback will be collected as part of the end-of-course evaluation. Learners should also be informed during onboarding about how to raise a concern or complaints.

Updates to this Annex

The core quality standard requirements set out in this Annex may be updated during the implementation of the Initiative. Any changes will be communicated to funded projects in due time, together with guidance on how they apply. Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the version published with this Call.