COVID^X

COVID eXponential Programme

Grant agreement ID: 101016065

ANNEX 2: GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Revision: v.1.0

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1   Introduction

This document provides a full set of information regarding the COVID-X acceleration process #1 and associated Open Call for Proposals (also referred as Open Call #1). All associated Annexes must be additionally considered for the submission of a Proposal.

General information on the project can be found in annex 1.

2   General information

2.1 Acronyms and definitions

This section describes concepts and terms that will be used in the open call documents. Unless otherwise stated the meaning of an acronym or term is the one stated in this section.

2.1.1 Persons, Entities, and committees

Table 1 Definitions of Persons, Entities, and committees

Term / Expression	Definition
COVID-X Consortium or Consortium	Set of legal entities that are cumulatively responsible to implement the COVID-X project as defined in the Grant Agreement for project number 101016065
Applicant	SME or set of legal entities led by an SME that intends to submit or submitted a proposal to the acceleration programme.
Beneficiary	An SME or a consortium of an SME and Healthcare provider, led by an SME that submitted a proposal to the acceleration programme which was accepted to be funded, and have a signed, or are in the process of signing, a sub-grant agreement.
External Evaluator	Expert hired by the consortium to assist in the evaluation of proposals. External evaluators cannot have conflicts of interest and are bounded by a confidentiality agreement.
Internal evaluation committee	Set of at least 3 persons members of the staff of the consortium, preferably from 3 entities representing the healthcare providers, technical partners, and business partners that are assigned the responsibility of performing evaluations in any stage of the acceleration programme.
Mentor	Person from the consortium that works closely with the beneficiary to foster communication with the consortium and assess progress of the project. The mentor may be part of an evaluation committee.

2.1.2 Acceleration programme

Table 2 Definitions of Acceleration programme

Term / Expression	Definition
COVID-X Acceleration programme or Acceleration Programme	The acceleration programme defined by the set of documents and templates provided by the COVID-X consortium as defined in section 4.1.1. The Acceleration programme is preceded by the application and the onboarding phases and contains 3 phases named as sprints 1 to Sprint 3

Term / Expression	Definition
Single solution	A single solution is a solution proposed by a single SME. Single solutions must meet the conditions mentioned in section 2 of Annex 1 and must focus on the 6 challenges proposed by the clinical partners of the consortium. Single solutions cannot address the open challenge.
Team solution	A team solution is a solution proposed by a consortium of an SME and a Healthcare provider. The SME will act as coordinator of the consortium. Team solutions must meet the conditions mentioned in section 2 of annex 1 and can focus on any of the challenges including the open challenge.
Application phase	Period when applicants can submit proposals to the open call. Each open call has a fixed deadline that is automatically enforced.
Evaluation phase	Period when the consortium evaluates and ranks the applications. In the end of the phase all proposals are notified of the results of the evaluation.
Onboarding phase	Period when the selected proposals and the consortium complete the administrative procedures to sign the sub-grant agreement and prepare administrative and ethical documents.
Sprints 1 to Sprint 3	Successive period of 3 months when the work is performed. In the end of the sprint the project is object of a formal evaluation made by an internal evaluation committee to assess if the project met the proposed goals.

2.1.3 Acceleration programme deliverables

The following subsection defines the deliverables already planned as part of the acceleration programme. Beneficiaries may be required to provide additional data to monitor project implementation.

Table 3 Definitions of Acceleration programme deliverables

Term / Expression	Definition
D1 Full ethics application	TBD
D2 KPIs definition	Deliverable where the KPIs proposed in the application stage are refined, agreed with the mentor, and approved by the consortium. The KPIs will be the tool to assess project performance and must be reported to the mentor.
D3, D4 & D5 Technical report and presentation of sprints 1,2 & 3	Evaluation materials to be provided by the beneficiary to the consortium at the end of each sprint. The report and the presentation will be used by the internal evaluation committee to assess project progress.
F1 Financial statement	Request for payment to be submitted after approval of D2 to D5.

2.1.4 Other concepts

Term / Expression	Definition
Scores in evaluation processes	Unless otherwise stated, all evaluation processes will rank each criterion with marks between 1 and 5. Half point scores are not given. Score values will indicate the following assessments: • 1: Fail. The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information. • 2: Very poor. The criterion is addressed in an unsatisfactory manner. • 3: Poor. There are serious inherent weaknesses.

Term / Expression	Definition
	• 3: Good. While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses that would need correcting. • 4: Very Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, although certain improvements are possible. • 5: Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.
Overall score	When the evaluation is made by a committee the score of each criteria is computed and rounded to the nearest integer before computing the overall score. Overall score is the sum the scores of each criteria multiplied by the respective weight, rounded to the nearest integer value.
Schedule for payments to Beneficiaries	All payments do beneficiaries are dependent on successful evaluation of deliverables and reception by the consortium of the corresponding financial statement. All payments will be made with undue delay preferably no later than 30 calendar days after the reception of the financial statement.

2.2 Means of submission

The F6S platform (www.f6s.com/covid-x) will be the entry point for all proposals' submission to COVID-X Open Calls. Submissions received by any other channel will be automatically discarded.

Documents required in subsequent phases will be submitted via a dedicated channel, which will be indicated by COVID-X consortium during the sub-granted projects execution.

2.3 Language

English is the only official language for COVID-X. Submissions done in any other language will not be eligible and will not be evaluated. English is also the only official language during the whole execution of the COVID-X programme.

2.4 Documentation formats

Any document requested in any of the phases must be submitted electronically in PDF format without restrictions for printing.

2.5 Data protection

In order to process and evaluate applications, COVID-X will need to collect Personal and Industrial Data. F6S Network Limited, as the Project Coordinator will act as Data Controller for data submitted through the F6S platform for these purposes. The F6S platform's system design and operational procedures ensure that data is managed in compliance with The General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). Each applicant will accept the F6S terms to ensure coverage.

Please note that COVID-X requests the minimum information needed to deliver the evaluation procedures or the acceleration programme. Annexes 6: Bank account information, and 7 Sub-grant

Agreement Template, are provided for reference and will only be requested if the applicant is accepted in the acceleration programme.

Please refer to https://www.f6s.com/terms to check F6S platform data privacy policy and security measures.

2.6 Origin of the funds

Any selected proposer will sign a dedicated Sub-Grantee Funding Agreement with the COVID-X consortium. **The funds attached to the Sub-Grantee Funding Agreement come directly from the funds of the European Project COVID-X funded itself by the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME), and remain therefore, property of the EU until the payment of the balance, whose management rights have been transferred to the project partners in COVID-X via European Commission Grant Agreement Number 101016065.**

As it can be seen in the Sub-Grantee Funding Agreement template (Annex 7), this relation between the sub-grantees and the European Commission through COVID-X project carries a set of obligations to the sub-grantees with the European Commission. It is the task of the sub-grantees to accomplish them, and of the COVID-X consortium partners to inform about them.

3   Proposal Eligibility Criteria

COVID-X invites market-oriented SMEs to provide innovative products to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.1 Definition of SME

An SME will be considered as such if complying with the European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC[1] and the SME user guide[2]. As a summary, the criteria which define an SME are:

    a. Independent (not linked or owned by another enterprise), in accordance to Recommendation 2003/361/EC.
    b. Headcount in Annual Work Unit (AWU) less than 250.
    c. Annual turnover less or equal to €50 million OR annual balance sheet total less or equal to €43 million.

3.2 SME Eligibility Criteria

An SME is considered eligible for COVID-X Acceleration Process if it complies will ALL the following rules:

    i.   It is a legal entity established and based in one of the EU Member States or an H2020 Associated

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[1] European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:124:0036:0041:en:PDF

[2] SME definition: Please check "User guide to the SME definition" available at https://op.europa.eu/s/n3t1

country as defined in H2020 rules for participation[3]:

ii.   It is a technology provider or technology adopter/user providing innovation to the healthcare.

iii. Start-ups that do not have yet annual turnover or balance sheets are also considered eligible given that they fulfil the criteria (a) and (b) of section §3.1 at submission time.

iv.   In case an SME is awarded a sub-project, it will remain eligible even if, at a certain point during the sub-project execution, it does not fulfil criteria (b) or (c) of section §3.1.

For British applicants: Please be aware that eligibility criteria must be complied with for the entire duration of the grant. If the United Kingdom withdraws from the EU during the grant period without concluding an agreement with the EU ensuring in particular that British applicants continue to be eligible, you will cease to receive EU funding (while continuing, where possible, to participate) or be required to leave the project. In that case, the rules of H2020 grants will apply.

Please note that a signed version of *Annex 4: Honour Declaration* and *Annex 5: SME Declaration* are mandatory for a proposal submission.

3.3 Proposal Eligibility Criteria

The following proposals eligibility criteria also apply:

i.   Proposals must have a **clear European dimension,** and contribute towards European Union digitization, **targeting clear economic and societal impact**.

ii.   **Each SME may submit only one (1) proposal at COVID-X Open Call #1. Multiple submissions is a disqualify factor**. In case an SME submit more than one proposal, all proposals that they have submitted will be automatically excluded from the evaluation process.

iii. **SMEs may participate in maximum one (1) accepted sub-project.** SMEs that have entered or have been invited to enter the COVID-X programme, even if they have not signed the contract for any reason, they are automatically excluded from participating in Open Call #2 even if they submit a different proposal.

iv.   **SMEs may re-submit at Open Call #2 a proposal that has not entered Open Call #1.** However, it is mandatory to flag that this is a resubmission and clearly explain the improvements that they have made.

v.   **Proposals from Linked SMEs[4] must demonstrate that there is no risk of double funding.** The fundamental principle underpinning the rules for public expenditure in the EU states that no costs for the same activity can be funded twice from the EU budget, as defined in the Article 111 of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation. In the case of proposals submitted by linked SMEs, all must clearly state the differences between them including but not limited to, technical aspects, market strategy and team composition, so that it remains no doubt that there is no risk of double funding. In order to properly assess these

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[3] Association to Horizon 2020 is governed by Article 7 of the Horizon 2020 Regulation. The list of associated countries is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/3cpart/h2020-hi-list-ac_en.pdf

[4] Please check the definition of Linked SME at "User guide to the SME definition" available at https://op.europa.eu/s/n3t1 and include the relevant information in annex 5

concerns COVID-X may assign all proposals to the same set of evaluators and, should any doubt remain, exclude all proposals.

vi. **The maximum amount of direct funding that a SME may receive via COVID-X is 100.000 EUROs via any mean.**

vii. **The maximum amount of direct funding that a Healthcare provider may receive via COVID-X is 50.000 EUROs via any mean.**

4   Selection to the Acceleration Programme

The indicative number of projects to be selected in the Programme 1 is 7 (Seven) single solutions and 8 (Eight) team solutions.

The indicative number of projects to be selected in Programme 2 is 6 (Six) single solutions and 10 (Ten) team solutions.

Depending on the quality of the proposals and the budget allocation, the consortium may decide to select a different number of projects in the first acceleration programme.

4.1   Open Call #1 Submission

The Open Call submission will follow the steps that are listed in this section:

4.1.1   Open Call #1 publication

The Open call is defined by the following documents:

- *Annex 1: Open Call text*, which provides a full set of information regarding the Open Call for Proposals for the COVID-X project.
- *Annex 2: Guidelines for Applicants*, this document.
- *Annex 3: Proposal Template,* an online application form, available at F6S platform (www.f6s.com/covid-x).
- *Annex 3.1: Proposal Supplement,* a word document providing information on proposal schedule, timing, Ethical & Security details.
- *Annex 4: Honour Declaration,* which declares that all conditions of the acceleration process are accepted by an SME legal representative.
- *Annex 5: SME Declaration*, which evaluates the status of the SMEs participating at an acceleration process.
- *Annex 6: Bank account information,* which collects information on the applicant(s)' bank account where the COVID-X payments will be sent to.
- *Annex 7: Sub-grant Agreement Template,* which provides a template of the sub-grant agreement that the successful applicants will be requested to sign.
- *Frequently Asked Questions & answers* published at the community feed (www.f6s.com/covid-x).

4.1.2 Applicants Registration

Interested applicants should register at the COVID-X F6S page (www.f6s.com/covid-x). This will be the central interface for managing the proposal applications for the remainder of the open calls.

4.1.3 Proposal Preparation

Please follow the steps:

1. For the proposal preparation, the applicants are requested to apply online and answer to all mandatory questions (with no exception) at: www.f6s.com/covid-x

2. Applicants that do not accept the terms and conditions and do not sign and upload to the f6s platform the completed *Annex 4: Honour Declaration* and *Annex 5: SME Declaration* will not be eligible.

3. Be concrete and concise. Questions have characters' limitations. Please examine all the acceleration process/ open call documents and attend the various online and physical events promoted by the COVID-X projects (covid-x.eu/).

4. It is highly recommended to submit your proposal well before the deadline. If the applicant discovers an error in the proposal, and provided the call deadline has not passed, the applicant may request the F6S COVID-X team to re-submit the proposal (for this purpose please contact us at support@f6s.com). **However, COVID-X is not committed that resubmission in time will be feasible in case the request for resubmission is not received by the F6S COVID-X team at least 48 hours before the call deadline.**

It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the proposal. Failure of the proposal to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays or working from multiple browsers or multiple browser windows, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the application as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

4.1.4 Proposals reception

Submissions will be done ONLY via the F6S platform on www.f6s.com/covid-x. A full list of proposers will be drafted containing their basic information for statistical purposes and clarity (which will be also shared with the EC for transparency).

The application reception will close as indicated in Annex1. There will not be any deadline extensions unless there is a Force Majeure situation (e.g. a major problem caused by the F6S platform and not by the proposers, makes the system unavailable for a long period).

4.2 Procedures to enter the Acceleration Programme

4.2.1 Step 1.1: Eligibility

A manual filtering process will be held to discard non-eligible proposals will follow the checklist. Eligibility criteria check will verify:

a. The proposing entity is a legal entity eligible for EC funding under the rules of H2020 [Y/N]

b. The proposing entity is an SME as defined in section 3.1 "Definition of SME" [Y/N]

c. The proposing entity is either a technology provider or technology adopter/user or provides innovation in the target areas of the project [Y/N]

d. Are the participation rules as expressed in section 3.2 "SME Eligibility" followed [Y/N]

e. In the case of Team Solutions is the consortium lead by an SME and the second element an Healthcare Provider [Y/N]

f. Is the participation rule as expressed in section 3.3 "Proposal Eligibility" followed [Y/N]

g. Is the proposal written in the English Language [Y/N]?

h. Are all required documentation: *Annex 4: Honour Declaration* and *Annex 5: SME Declaration submitted correctly* [Y/N]

Proposals being marked as non-eligible will get a rejection letter including the reasons (a to h) for being catalogued as non-eligible. No further feedback on the process will be given.

4.2.2 Step 1.2 Proposals pre-screening

The goal of the pre-screening phase is to filter the proposals that are aligned with the COVID-X project, meet the impact expected and are feasible in the time scope of the project.

The proposals that pass the eligibility check will move to a pre-screening stage where an internal evaluation committee will evaluate the proposals according to the following criteria:

Table 4 Pre-Screening evaluation criteria

Criteria	Description	Weight
Alignment	The proposal is aligned with the challenges or the open challenge as defined in Annex 1. The solution is data driven. The TRL and CE marking is in the scope of the programme	1/3
Impact		1/3
Feasibility	The datasets required are available in the COVID-X Sandbox, the technical integration is feasible in the timeframe of the acceleration programme	1/3

Section 2.1.4 defines how Individual criteria will be scored and how the final score is computed.

In the pre-screening stage the minimum threshold for each criterion is 3 and the minimum overall threshold is 11.

Proposals that do not meet the minimum thresholds will be excluded from the acceleration programme.

4.2.3 Step 1.3: External remote evaluation

An external evaluation board with experience in the health domain, technologies and business development will review each proposal, scoring them based on the following criteria:

Table 5 External Remote Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Description	Weight
Excellence	Projects must demonstrate a clear set of objectives aligned with the definition of the COVID-X OC and with the general objectives of the project. The Excellence is evaluated according to the following criteria: ● Clarity and pertinence of the objectives; ● Excellence, innovation and quality of the objectives.	1/3
Impact	Applicants must define a clear set of deliverables aligned with the objectives of the OC. Proposals must demonstrate impact on the COVID-X ecosystem and its contribution to meeting the overall project objectives. The impact is evaluated according to the following criteria: ● Strengthening the competitiveness and growth of companies by developing innovations meeting the needs of European and global markets; and, where relevant, by delivering such innovations to the markets; ● Effectiveness of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results (including management of IPR), to communicate the project, and to manage research data where relevant.	1/3
Implementation	Applicants must provide credible evidence that the project delivery team has the necessary skills, infrastructure and management experience to be able to deliver the project in the timescales and budget specified. The quality and the efficiency of the implementation will be evaluated according to the following criteria: ● Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan, including appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources, justification of resources; ● Describe the solution specification and testing, piloting/ deployment steps that they aim to implement and consequently its value/benefit for the industry; ● Detail the overall project cost, the amount of funding requested and how it will be spent. This budget must represent good value for money in the opinion of the evaluation panel selected to evaluate the OC applications ● Appropriateness of the skills and experience of the project delivery team.	1/3

Section 2.1.4 defines how Individual criteria will be scored and how the final score is computed.

The threshold for each criterion will be *four (4)*, while the overall score threshold will be **thirteen (13).** That means if a proposal receives less than 4 in one criterion or less than 13 overall score it is automatically rejected.

Each evaluator will record his/her individual opinion of each proposal on an Individual Evaluation Report. They will then communicate to prepare a single consensus Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) for each proposal, representing opinions and scores on which the evaluators agree and which they will sign.

4.2.4 Step 1.3: Intermediate Ranking and Selection

At the end of the evaluation process all proposals will be ranked in a single list, independent of the topic(s) that it targets. The criteria for the ranking of the proposals will be semi-automatic following the rules below:

- **Rule 1:** The proposals will be ranked based on their overall score (sum of the criterion 1 to 3).
- **Rule 2:** In case following Rule 1 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have higher impact (Criterion 2).

In case following Rule 2 there are still proposals in the same position, and the position of on the rank allows places at least one on them in the short list for interview, the COVID-X will invite all the proposals in the same position to the interview process.

4.2.5 Step 1.4 Online interview

The top projects identified in Step 1.3 will be invited to an online interview which aims to deeply understand project concept, team skills & competence, capacity and willingness to exploit the results.

The interview may take 30 minutes. If the evaluation committee needs, the interview may be extended. Applicants will make a pitch presentation of the project of up to 10 minutes and answer questions from the panel during the remaining time.

The interviews will be carried out by 3 internal evaluation board members and will evaluate the following criteria:

Table 6 Online Interview Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Description	Weight
Concept & Technology	Confirmation of proposed targets and technology fit;	1/4
Business	the viability of the proposed business model; readiness to present to investors & corporates	1/4
Implementation	reliability to reach milestones	1/4
Team	Quality of the team and benefit that the team can extract from the acceleration programme	1/4

Section 2.1.4 defines how Individual criteria will be scored and how the final score is computed.

If during interview applicants do not commit to what has been presented in application form, these will be declassified.

If after the interview the evaluation panel still has doubts the team may be requested to answer additional questions in writing.

4.2.6 Step 1.5 Consensus meeting matchmaking

After the interview's, evaluators will gather to discuss the evaluated proposal, to generate a common scoring, to report the evaluation as well as allocate single solutions to the COVID-X healthcare providers.

The allocation of single solutions to healthcare providers will be made using the following process:

1. Proposals will be ranked according to the overall score of the online interview.
2. Starting from the top, single solutions will be matched with the healthcare providers in the order provided in the application form, Annex 3.1.
3. If single solution proposal cannot be assigned to a healthcare provider because the capacity of healthcare providers is allocated the proposal is rejected.
4. The process follows until all available slots in healthcare providers are occupied or there are no more single solutions eligible to be allocated.

One the Single Solutions are selected, the budget available for the team solutions is reassessed eventually increasing the indicative number of team solutions to be funded in the first acceleration programme.

The consortium will select the top team solutions from the list until the budget available is allocated.

Notes:

When the consortium needs to untie scores of proposals to decide which will be funded the following rules will apply:

1. The proposal with highest score in the team criteria of step 1.4 will be selected
2. The proposal with highest score in the team business criteria of step 1.4 will be selected
3. The proposal with highest score in the overall evaluation of step 1.3 will be selected
4. The proposal with highest score in the team impact criteria of step 1.3 will be selected
5. The proposal with highest score in the team impact implementation of step 1.3 will be selected
6. The internal committee will convene and decide between the tied proposals to select which one will be selected.

4.2.7 Redress process

Within 3 working days of the delivery of a rejection letter considering the proposal as non-eligible or an ESR that ranks the proposal below the selection borderline, the proposer may submit a request for redress if s/he believes the results of the eligibility checks have not been correctly applied, or if s/he feels that there has been a shortcoming in the way his/her proposal has been evaluated that may affect the final decision on whether to enter the Acceleration programme or not.

In that case, an internal review committee of the COVID-X consortium will examine the request for redress. The committee's role is to ensure a coherent interpretation of such requests, and equal treatment of applicants.

Requests must be:

- Related to the evaluation process or eligibility checks.
- Clearly describe the complaint.

- Received within the time limit (3 working days) from the reception of a rejection letter considering the proposal as non-eligible or the ESR information letter delivered.
- Sent by the SME legal representative that has also submitted the proposal.

The committee will review the complaint and will recommend an appropriate course of action. If there is clear evidence of a shortcoming that could affect the eventual funding decision, it is possible that all or part of the proposal will be re-evaluated.

Please note:

- This procedure is concerned only with the evaluation and/or eligibility checking process. The committee will not call into question the scientific or technical judgement of appropriately qualified experts.
- A re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that affects the final decision on whether to fund it or not. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if a proposal has failed anyway on other criteria.
- The evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. It may be lower than the original score.

Only one request for redress per proposal will be considered by the committee. All requests for redress will be treated in confidence and must be sent to Project Coordinator via the F6S platform.

In case a proposal under the redress procedure is re-evaluated and the new evaluation score is higher, it will be compared with the proposal that has entered the acceleration programme with the lowest ranking. The comparison will use the ranking rules as expressed in Step 1.4. In case the proposal under the redress procedure ranks higher then both proposals will be invited to enter the acceleration phase.

4.3 Onboarding Phase

After the proposal has been accepted the Beneficiary will start the onboarding process. The goal of this phase is to prepare the work to be performed during the acceleration programme. Three processes need to be carried out in parallel:

- Contract Preparation and signature
- Acceleration services tailoring
- Submission of the full ethics application to the relevant Ethical Committee including the study protocol

4.3.1 Step 1.4: Contract Preparation and signature

After the Open Call evaluation conclusion and projects selection, the COVID-X coordinator will start the contract preparation in collaboration with the proposals' coordinator that have been evaluated in the short list. The Contract preparation will go via an administrative and financial checking (and potentially into technical or ethical/security negotiations) based on the evaluators' comments. On a case by case approach, a phone call or teleconference may be needed for clarification.

The objective of the contract preparation is fulfilling the legal requirements between COVID-X consortium and every beneficiary of the call. The items covered will be:

- Inclusion of the comments (if any) in the Evaluation Summary Report of the proposals and mapping to the Sub-grant agreement (contract).

- To validate the status information of the SME, the following documents will be required:

  o **SMEs declaration:** signed and stamped. In the event the applicant declares being non-autonomous, the balance sheet and profit and loss account (with annexes) for the last period for upstream and downstream organizations should also be provided.

  o **Status Information Form**. In case this is not a start-up, it includes the headcount (AWU), balance, profit & loss accounts of the latest closed financial year and the relation, upstream and downstream, of any linked or partner company. In case it is a start-up, legal document of the official founding date.

  o **Legal existence**. Company Register, Official Gazette or other official document per country showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number and a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent).

  o In cases where the **number of employees and/or the ownership is not clearly identified**: any other supporting documents which demonstrate headcount and ownership such as payroll details, annual reports, national regional association records, etc. In case it is a start-up, legal document of the official founding date and declaration of ownership.

- **SME Bank account information:** The account where the funds will be transferred will be indicated via a form signed by the SME legal representative and the bank representative. The account should be a business bank account of the SME.

It should be emphasised that each **SME should provide at contract preparation time a valid VAT[5] and PIC[6]. Failure to provide the VAT number and PIC Number will automatically result in proposal rejection**.

The request, by COVID-X consortium, of the above documentation will be done including deadlines. In general, the sub-project negotiation should be concluded within 2 weeks. An additional week may be provided by the COVID-X coordinator in case of a significant reasoning. In case negotiations have not been concluded within the above period, the proposal is automatically rejected and the next proposal in the reserve list is invited.

At the end of the negotiation phase, the **sub-grantee funding agreement** will be signed between the COVID-X Consortium represented by its coordinator (F6S) and the Budget Holder (UPM) and the beneficiary SME.

Please note:

I. The sub-grantee funding agreement/contract will cover the complete programme.

II. **For British applicants:** Please be aware that eligibility criteria must be complied with for the entire duration of the grant. If the United Kingdom withdraws from the EU during the grant period without concluding an agreement with the EU ensuring in particular that British

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[5] To be checked at European Commission services such as http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/vies/

[6] To be checked at the European Commission services at https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register

applicants continue to be eligible, you will cease to receive EU funding (while continuing, where possible, to participate) or be required to leave the project. In that case, the rules of H2020 grants will apply.

4.3.2 Step 2.1: Acceleration services tailoring

During this phase, the Beneficiary and the consortium will identify from the pool of services the ones that will be more relevant to achieve the project goals and design a personalized acceleration programme.

4.3.3 Step 2.3: Submission of the research protocol to the Ethical Committee

The beneficiary must prepare and submit the research protocol for approval by the relevant Ethical Committee before the end of the onboarding phase.

4.4 Sprint 1

Sprint 1 starts in April 1st, 2021 and has the duration of 3 months. The completion of the onboarding phase is desirable as delays will impact but not prevent the success of the project, and the possibility of releasing funds to the beneficiary in the expected timeframes.

The generic goals of Sprint 1 are:

- Define the KPIs to be used in project monitoring (KPIs definition milestone)
- Complete the technical integration with the COVID-X Sandbox
- Get approval from the Ethical Committee

The specific goals of Sprint 1, as well as the initial KPIs to be used to monitor the project are defined by the Beneficiary in Annex 3.1 of the proposal

4.4.1 Step 3.1: KPIs definition milestone

The Beneficiary with support from the mentor will create D1 Project KPIs to be submitted until the end of M01 of the acceleration programme.

The basis for the KPIs are the information included in the Annex 3.1 of the proposal.

The mentor will provide guidance but is not responsible for the deliverable.

4.4.2 Step 3.2: KPIs definition Evaluation

At the end of sub-project's month (M01), a remote review will take place to evaluate the definition of the KPIs. One week before the review, the sub-project coordinator should submit deliverable *D1: KPI definition*.

The review will be performed by an Internal evaluation committee via a teleconference platform (e.g. Skype or WebEx).

The sub-project will make a short presentation of the KPIs.

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After the review, the sub-project coordinator will receive a review report, including comments and potential recommendations. The report will also state if the D1 is accepted or not.

- On acceptance of the D1 Deliverable, the sub-project coordinator will be requested to submit a financial statement F1 (template will be provided) requesting the intermediate voucher of 10% of the grant.

- On rejection of the D1 Deliverable, or in case of not satisfactory review, the sub-project coordinator will be requested to resubmit the deliverable, payment will not be made.

4.4.3 Step 3.3: Project implementation

Project implementation will start in M01. The project must complete the work defined in the plan provided in annex 3 of the application.

During this sub-phase, the SME must participate in various teaching webinars and/or bootcamp events to extend their knowledge on the COVID-X domains and commercialization/business training.

The duration of this sub-phase will be approximately 3 months, covering project months M1 to M3.

4.4.4 Step 3.4 Sprint 1 Evaluation

At the end of sub-project month M3, a remote review will take place to evaluate the project progress.

One week before the review, the sub-project coordinator should submit the deliverable D2 Presentation and Technical report of sprint 1.

The review will be performed by an Internal evaluation committee via a teleconference platform (e.g. Skype or WebEx).

The sub-project will make a short presentation of the progress.

After the review, the sub-project coordinator will receive a review report, including comments and potential recommendations. The report will also state if the D1 is accepted or not.

- On acceptance of the D2 Deliverable, the sub-project coordinator will be requested to submit a financial statement F1 (template will be provided) requesting the intermediate voucher of 30% of the grant.

- On rejection of the D2 Deliverable, or in case of not satisfactory review, the sub-project coordinator will be requested to resubmit the deliverable, payment will not be made. The sub-project must continue project implementation.

4.5 Sprint 2

Sprint 2 after successful completion of Sprint 1 and has the duration of 3 months.

The generic goals of Sprint 2 are:

- Validation of the Data Model

- Agreement on IP

The specific goals of Sprint 2 are defined by the Beneficiary in Annex 3.1 of the proposal

4.5.1 Step 3.3: Project implementation

The project must complete the work defined in the plan provided in annex 3 of the application as well as address comments from the reviewers.

During this sub-phase, the SME must participate in various teaching webinars and/or bootcamp events to extend their knowledge on the COVID-X domains and commercialization/business training.

Additionally, the Beneficiary may need to attend one physical event in Europe.

The duration of this sub-phase will be approximately 3 months.

4.5.2 Step 3.4 Sprint 2 Evaluation

At the end of sub-project month M3, a review will take place to evaluate the project progress.   The review will be preferably face to face in a venue to be announced.

One week before the review, the sub-project coordinator should submit the deliverable D3 Presentation and Technical report of sprint 2.

The review will be performed by an Internal evaluation committee

The sub-project will make a short presentation of the progress.

After the review, the sub-project coordinator will receive a review report, including comments and potential recommendations. The report will also state if the D1 is accepted or not.

- On acceptance of the D3 Deliverable, the sub-project coordinator will be requested to submit a financial statement F1 (template will be provided) requesting the intermediate voucher of 30% of the grant.
- On rejection of the D3 Deliverable, or in case of not satisfactory review, the sub-project coordinator will be requested to resubmit the deliverable, payment will not be made. The sub-project must continue project implementation.

4.6 Sprint 3

Sprint 3 starts after successful completion of Sprint 2 and has the duration of 3 months.

The generic goals of Sprint 2 are:

- Completion of the feasibility study

The specific goals of Sprint 2 are defined by the Beneficiary in Annex 3.1 of the proposal

4.6.1 Step 3.3: Project implementation

The project must complete the work defined in the plan provided in annex 3 of the application as well as address comments from the reviewers.

During this sub-phase, the SME must participate in various teaching webinars and/or bootcamp events to extend their knowledge on the COVID-X domains and commercialization/business training.

Additionally, the Beneficiary may need to attend one physical event in Europe.

The duration of this sub-phase will be approximately 3 months.

4.6.2 Step 3.4 Sprint 3 Evaluation

At the end of sub-project month M9, a review will take place to evaluate the project progress. The review will be preferably face to face in a venue to be announced.

One week before the review, the sub-project coordinator should submit the deliverable D4 Presentation and Technical report of sprint 3 .

The review will be performed by an Internal evaluation committee

The sub-project will make a short presentation of the progress.

After the review, the sub-project coordinator will receive a review report, including comments and potential recommendations. The report will also state if the D1 is accepted or not.

- On acceptance of the D3 Deliverable, the sub-project coordinator will be requested to submit a financial statement F1 (template will be provided) requesting the intermediate voucher of 30% of the grant.

- On rejection of the D3 Deliverable, or in case of not satisfactory review, the sub-project coordinator will be requested to resubmit the deliverable, payment will not be made. The sub-project must continue project implementation.

5 Sub-Projects Execution Summary

5.1 Mentors

Each sub-project will be assigned at least one mentor. The mentor will communicate with the sub-project on a regular basis and in order to overview the progress and provide technical or business advice.

The COVID-X programme requires that the meetings are held once every two weeks. Mentors and teams will decide the schedule and agenda for the meetings

5.2 Evaluations summary

Each project will go through 5 evaluations, each one highlighting the end of a phase.

Table 7 Project evaluations

Evaluation 1			
When	Open Call #1	Estimated project month	Before project start
Mean	Proposal submission		
If successful	The proposal signs the contract and enters the programme phase		
Evaluation 2			
When	COVID-X KPIs definition	Estimated project month	End of M1
Mean	Deliverable D2 KPIs definition.		
If successful	The beneficiary receives 10% of the budget as lump sum		
Evaluation 3			
When	Remote Review	Estimated project month	End of M3
Mean	Deliverable D3: Sprint 1 Technical report and presentation		
If successful	The beneficiary receives 30% of the budget as lump sum		
Evaluation 4			
When	Physical or remote review	Estimated project month	End of M6
Mean	Deliverable D4: Sprint 2 Technical report and presentation		
If successful	The beneficiary receives 30% of the budget as lump sum		
Evaluation 5			
When	Physical or remote review	Estimated project month	End of M9
Mean	Deliverable D5: Sprint 3 Technical report and presentation		
If successful	The beneficiary receives 30% of the budget as lump sum		

The sub-project coordinator should deliver at least one (1) week in advance all relevant deliverables, so that the reviewers will be able to be prepared. During the review, the sub-project members should present their work, answer questions, and demonstrate their experiment.

After each successful evaluation and within **5 working days**, the sub-project coordinator should send the relevant Financial Statement to the coordinator. Additional conditions and eligibility criteria have already been described in the previous sections.

6   Responsibilities of beneficiaries

The selected SMEs are indirectly beneficiaries of European Commission funding. As such, they are responsible for the proper use of the funding and ensure that the recipients comply with obligations under H2020 specific requirements as described in Horizon 2020 - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) [1] The obligations that are applicable to the recipients include[7]:

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[7] The obligations described here are not binding and may be modified, refined or additional obligations may be inserted during the sub-project negotiation if needed.

6.1 Conflict of Interest

The beneficiary SMEs must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the sub-project is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

They must formally notify to the COVID-X coordinator without delay any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation. The COVID-X coordinator may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

If the sub-contract consortium member breaches any of its obligations, the sub-contract may be automatically terminated. Moreover, costs may be rejected.

6.2 Data Protection & Confidentiality

During implementation of the sub-project and for four years after the end of the sub-project, the parties must keep confidential any data, documents or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential at sub-contract signing time ('confidential information').

If a beneficiary SME requests, the Commission and the COVID-X consortium may agree to keep such information confidential for an additional period beyond the initial four years. This will be explicitly stated at the sub-contract.

If information has been identified as confidential during the sub-project execution or only orally, it will be considered to be confidential only if this is accepted by the COVID-X coordinator and confirmed in writing within 15 days of the oral disclosure. Unless otherwise agreed between the parties, they may use confidential information only to implement the Agreement.

The sub-project consortium may disclose confidential information to the COVID-X consortium and to the selected reviewers, who will be bounded by a specific Non-Disclosure Agreement.

6.3 Promoting the action and give visibility to the EU funding

The beneficiary SMEs must promote the sub-project, the COVID-X project and its results, by providing targeted information to multiple audiences (including the media and the public) in a strategic and effective manner and to highlight the financial support of the EC.

Unless the European Commission or the COVID-X coordinator requests or agrees otherwise or unless it is impossible, any communication activity related to the action (including in electronic form, via social media, etc.), any publicity, including at a conference or seminar or any type of information or promotional material (brochure, leaflet, poster, presentation etc.), and any infrastructure, equipment and major results funded by the grant must:

    (a)   display the EU emblem;

    (b)   display the COVID-X logo and

(c) include the following text:

> For communication activities: *"This project has indirectly received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under project COVID-X (grant agreement No 824509)"*.

> For infrastructure, equipment and major results: *"This [infrastructure][equipment][insert type of result] is part of a sub-project that has indirectly received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under project COVID-X (grant agreement No 824509)"*.

When displayed in association with a logo, the European emblem should be given appropriate prominence. This obligation to use the European emblem in respect of projects to which the EC contributes implies no right of exclusive use. It is subject to general third-party use restrictions which do not permit the appropriation of the emblem, or of any similar trademark or logo, whether by registration or by any other means. Under these conditions, the Beneficiary is exempted from the obligation to obtain prior permission from the EC to use the emblem. Further detailed information on the EU emblem can be found on the Europa web page.

Any publicity made by the beneficiary SME in respect of the project, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, must specify that it reflects only the author's views and that the EC or COVID-X project is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

The EC and the COVID-X consortium shall be authorised to publish, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, the following information:

- the name of the beneficiary SME;
- contact address of the beneficiary SME;
- the general purpose of the project;
- the amount of the financial contribution foreseen for the project; after the final payment, and the amount of the financial contribution actually received;
- the geographic location of the activities carried out;
- the list of dissemination activities and/or of patent (applications) relating to foreground;
- the details/references and the abstracts of scientific publications relating to foreground and, if funded within the sub-project, the published version or the final manuscript accepted for publication;
- the publishable reports submitted to COVID-X;
- any picture or any audio-visual or web material provided to the EC and COVID-X in the framework of the project.

The beneficiary SME shall ensure that all necessary authorisations for such publication have been obtained and that the publication of the information by the EC and COVID-X does not infringe any rights of third parties.

Upon a duly substantiated request by the sub-project coordinator on behalf of any sub-project member, the COVID-X, if such permission is provided by the EC, may agree to forego such publicity if disclosure of the information indicated above would risk compromising the beneficiary's security, academic or commercial interests.

6.4 Financial audits and controls

The European Commission (EC) will monitor that COVID-X beneficiaries and the beneficiary SME comply with the conditions for financial support to third parties such as set out in Annex 1 of the COVID-X grant agreement and may take any action foreseen by the grant agreement in case of non-compliance vis à vis the beneficiary concerned.

Moreover, the EC may at any time during the implementation of the COVID-X project and up to 5 (five) years after the end of the COVID-X project, arrange for financial audits to be carried out, by external auditors, or by the EC services themselves including the European Anti-Fraud office (OLAF). The audit procedure shall be deemed to be initiated on the date of receipt of the relevant letter sent by the EC. Such audits may cover financial, systemic and other aspects (such as accounting and management principles) relating to the proper execution of the grant agreement. They shall be carried out on a confidential basis.

The beneficiary SME shall make available directly to the EC all detailed information and data that may be requested by the EC or any representative authorised by it, with a view to verifying that the grant agreement is properly managed and performed in accordance with its provisions and that costs have been charged in compliance with it. This information and data must be precise, complete and effective.

The beneficiary SME shall keep all sub-project deliverables and the originals or, in exceptional cases, duly authenticated copies – including electronic copies – of all documents relating to the sub-project contract for up to five years from the end of the project. These shall be made available to the EC where requested during any audit under the grant agreement.

In order to carry out these audits, the beneficiary SME shall ensure that the EC´s services and any external body(ies) authorised by it have on-the-spot access at all reasonable times, notably to the sub-project applicant offices, to its computer data, to its accounting data and to all the information needed to carry out those audits, including information on individual salaries of persons involved in the project. They shall ensure that the information is readily available on the spot at the moment of the audit and, if so requested, that data be handed over in an appropriate form.

On the basis of the findings made during the financial audit, a provisional report shall be drawn up. It shall be sent by the EC or its authorised representative to the beneficiary concerned, which may make observations thereon within one month of receiving it. The Commission may decide not to take into account observations conveyed or documents sent after that deadline. The final report shall be sent to the beneficiary concerned within two months of expiry of the aforesaid deadline.

On the basis of the conclusions of the audit, the EC shall take all appropriate measures which it considers necessary, including the issuing of recovery orders regarding all or part of the payments made by it and the application of any applicable sanction.

The European Court of Auditors shall have the same rights as the EC, notably right of access, for the purpose of checks and audits, without prejudice to its own rules.

In addition, the EC may carry out on-the-spot checks and inspections in accordance with Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/96 of 11 November 1996 concerning on-the-spot checks and inspections carried out by the Commission in order to protect the European Communities' financial interests against fraud and other irregularities.

6.5 Sub-project Communication

The sub-project coordinator should:

- Provide any notice be in writing to the COVID-X project coordinator;
- Notify immediately any change of persons or contact details to the COVID-X coordinator. The address list shall be accessible to all concerned.

7 COVID-X Events

COVID-X will organise physical events in Europe to the teams involved. The events will be compulsory to attend in person. At least one representative per team will be required on each event, although it is strongly advised that at least two people attend.

Failing to attend any of the mandatory events defined at the beginning of each phase by COVID-X will automatically disqualify the team from COVID-X programme.

The foreseen events are:

Table 8 List of programme events

Event	Scope	Where	When	Duration	Mandatory
Sprint 2 mid-term event	Business mentoring and/or demo session	TBD	M4 or M5	2 days	Yes
Sprint 2 evaluation	Evaluation of Sprint 2	TBD	End of M6	2 days	Yes
Sprint 3 mid-term event	Business mentoring and/or demo session	TBD	M7 or M8	2 days	Yes
Sprint 3 evaluation & demo day	Evaluation of Sprint 3 and demo day	TBD	End of M9	3 days	Yes

Please note that the locations and dates at the above table are indicative and not binding. They may be modified during the execution of the program.

8 Checklist

1) **Does your planned work fit with the call for proposals?** Check that your proposed work does indeed address one of the topics open in this call.

2) **Does your proposal address data solutions and artificial intelligence technology?** Check that your proposed work does indeed address the domains of the call in one of the challenges.

3) **Is your proposal eligible?** The eligibility criteria are given in chapter 3 "Proposal Eligibility Criteria". In particular, make sure that you satisfy the minimum participation requirements (entity from eligible countries).

4) **Is your proposal complete?** Have you completed all mandatory questions?

5) **Does your proposal fulfil questions requests/ comments?** Proposals should be precise, concise and must answer to requested questions, which are designed to correspond to the applied evaluation. Omitting requested information will almost certainly lead to lower scores and possible rejection.

6) **Have you maximised your chances?** There will be strong competition. Therefore, edit your proposal tightly, strengthen or eliminate weak points.

7) **Have you submitted your proposal before the deadline?** It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the proposal. Failure of the proposal to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the message as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

8) **Have you provided the necessary annexes?**

9) **Do you need further advice and support?** You are strongly advised to communicate with the COVID-X team via the COVID-X blog in the F6S platform and via info@covid-x.eu .

Do not forget that it is mandatory the applicant SME to have a valid VAT number and PIC number during contract preparation time.

9 Contacts

The COVID-X consortium will provide information to the applicants only via the F6S blog, so that the information (question and answer), will be visible to all participants.

More info at: https://covid-x.eu/

Apply via: https://www.f6s.com/covid-x/about

F6S support team: support@f6s.com

Online Q&A: https://www.f6s.com/covid-x/discuss

For extraordinary communication need, please contact the Help Desk: info@covid-x.eu .

10 References

[1] Digital Innovation Initiatives based on European Networks of Competence Centres in H2020, available online at https://smartanythingeverywhere.eu/smart-anything-everywhere/

[2] REGULATION (EU) No 1290/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2013 laying down the rules for participation and dissemination in "Horizon 2020 - the

Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020)" and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1906/2006

[3] EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology, "Guidance note on financial support to third parties under H2020", Annex K. "Actions involving financial support to third parties", http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/wp/2016_2017/annexes/h2020-wp1617-annex-k-fs3p_en.pdf

[4] H2020 Call Objective ICT-04-2017 TOPIC: Smart Anything Everywhere Initiative, https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/ict-04-2017.html