6G-Path

Annex 1

Guidelines for Applicants

6G-PATH – Open Call #1

Co-funded by the European Union

6GSNS

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Acronyms and definitions

This section describes the relevant acronyms and terms that are used in the Open Call documentation. Unless otherwise stated, the definition of a term is the one stated in this section.

Table 1. Definitions of the acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
5G	The Fifth Generation of Mobile Communications
6G	The Sixth Generation of Mobile Communications
AWU	Annual Work Unit
DPO	Data Protection Officer
DSS	Digital Signature Services
EC	European Commission
ESR	Evaluation Summary Report
EU	European Union
FSTP	Financial Support for Third Parties
GA	Grant Agreement
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HE	Horizon Europe
IP	Internet Protocol
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KVI	Key Value Indicator
MS	Member State
OC	Open Call
OLAF	European Anti-Fraud Office
PIC	Participant identification Code
R&D	Research and Development
RTO	Research and Training Organisation
SME	Small and medium-size enterprises
SNS - JU	Smart Network and Services Joint Undertaking
TRL	Technology Readiness Level
VAT	Value Added Tax

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Table 2. Definitions of persons, entities, and committees

Term	Definition
Consortium	Group of legal entities that are cumulatively responsible for implementing the 6G-PATH project as defined in the Grant Agreement number 101139172.
Applicant	Individual or organisation that intends to submit or has submitted a proposal to the funding programme.
Beneficiary	An individual or organisation that has submitted a proposal to the funding programme that has been accepted for funding and has signed or is in the process of signing a sub-grant agreement.
External Evaluator	An expert that has been invited by 6G-PATH to assist in the evaluation of the proposals submitted to the funding programme. Experts cannot have conflicts of interest and are bound by their own confidentiality agreement.

Table 3. Definitions of the funding programme

Term	Definition
6G-PATH Funding Programme	Programme under which the present Open Call is run. It is defined by the documents and templates provided by the 6G-PATH consortium as defined in section 4.1. The funding programme considers two parts: 1. Open Call for proposals, evaluation, contract preparation and signing. 2. Implementation with three phases/ sprints (for selected beneficiaries).
Proposal 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. At the end of the phase, all proposals are notified of the results of the evaluation.
Contract Preparation & Signing Phase	Period when the selected proposals and the consortium complete the administrative procedures to sign the sub-grant agreement and prepare administrative documents.
Implementation Phase	Successive period of six (-6-) or eight (-8-) months, varying according to the Open Call phases, when the work is performed by the beneficiary. At the end of each phase, the project is subject to a formal evaluation made by an internal evaluation team to assess if the project is meeting its objectives.

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1 6G-PATH overview

The objective of the 6G-PATH project is to help foster the further development and integration of new and improved tools and products from EU companies with 5G/6G, while also measuring relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Key Value Indicators (KVIs). To achieve this, seven (7) testbeds will be part of the project consortium, which will be used by ten (10) use cases spread across four (4) key verticals such as: Health, Education, Smart Cities and Farming.

A relevant portion of the project budget has been allocated to Financial Support for Third Parties (FSTP). Through two Open Calls, the project envisions the integration of two (-2-) new pilot sites and the extension of the testbeds with ten (10) additional technologies (Open Call #1), as well as thirty (30) new Use Cases (Open Call #2) to further involve the community and obtain additional metrics and outcomes .

2 Presentation of the 6G-PATH – Open Call #1

The 6G-PATH – Open Call #1 aims to engage different entities, including SMEs and startups, research and technology organisations (RTOs) and Corporates (telecom operators):

- For the **integration of two (2) new testbeds** with capacity to setup a B5G/6G network infrastructure and make these available for testing and validating new services/applications supporting additional use cases scenarios.
- For the **development of ten (10) extensions** to integrate advances in any of the seven (7) testbed infrastructure services, aligned with B5G and 6G standards and targets.

As such, the 6G-PATH – Open Call #1 is divided in two tracks:

1. In "**TRACK A - Infrastructure deployment"**, 6G-PATH will fund **two (2) applications (additional third-party testbeds)** that enable the development and integration of a B5G/6G network infrastructure made available for testing and validating services/ applications across the Health, Education, Smart Cities, and Farming verticals. (See Annex 1.2 for technical details on the components).

2. In "**TRACK B - Infrastructure software extensions"**, 6G-PATH will fund **ten (10) applications (third-party testbed extensions)** that integrate advances in any of the seven testbed infrastructure services.

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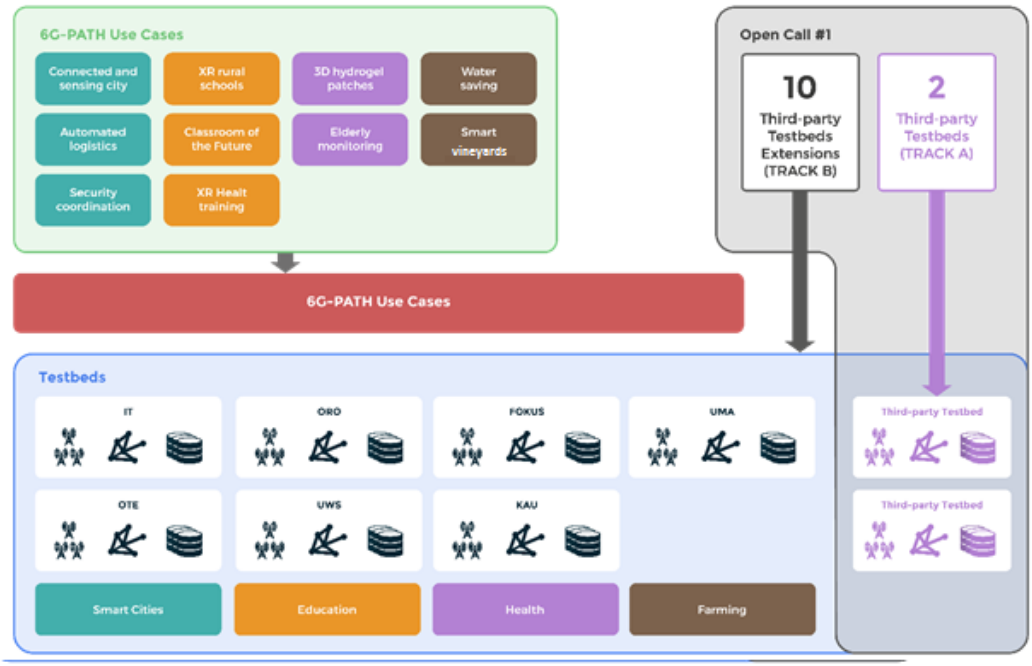

Figure 1. 6G-PATH Use Cases, Testbeds and Third parties - Open Call #1

The 6G-PATH – Open Call #1 focuses on infrastructure deployments that go beyond what the vertical use cases require and span across different network types and services, where verticals can run their use cases and leverage B5G/6G solutions and technologies.

With that in mind, these deployments will support pilots for the extended validation of experiments with an elevated TRL. Hence, the proposals submitted to the 6G-PATH – Open Call #1 are expected to be ambitious and innovative, showcasing the impact of the 6G-PATH project on industry transformation with a focus on scalability potential.

3 Eligibility criteria

All applicants and consortia must meet all the requirements described in this section to be eligible for the 6G-PATH – Open Call #1.

3.1 Type of eligible applicants

3.1.1 Types of applicants

The call will fund projects developed by:

- **TRACK A - Infrastructure deployment**: Any entity with the capacity to set up a B5G/6G network infrastructure and make these available for testing and validating new services/applications.
- **TRACK B - Infrastructure software extensions:** Any entity that has the capability to contribute to the development and implementation of cutting-edge innovation projects aligned with the objectives of the Open Call.

All entities must be based in the European Union or in a Horizon Europe associated Member State and have a valid PIC number.

Note: *Unincorporated startups are not eligible. Regardless of the TRACK to which they apply, all entities participating in the Open Call must be registered with a verifiable VAT.*

3.1.2 Consortium eligibility

Applicants can submit their applications as either an individual organisation/ entity or as a consortium comprising a maximum of two (2) entities.

Consortia submissions must include at least one (1) SME who integrates advances into the infrastructure services aligned with B5G and 6G standards and targets.

Applicants may apply to both TRACKs in this Open Call. However, only the highest-ranked proposal, in which the entities participate, will be eligible for funding. Any other applications involving these entities, regardless of their scores, will be disqualified.

3.1.3 Eligible countries

Legal entities established in any of the following countries are eligible to participate in the 6G-PATH – Open Call #1:

- European Union Member States, with a valid VAT and PIC number.
- Horizon Europe associated countries (those that have signed an agreement with the EU as identified in the *HE Programme Guide*) according to the updated list published by the European Commission.

6G-PATH – Open Call #1 follows the rules applied by the EC for the R&D Programme Horizon Europe in terms of geographical coverage, eligibility, and exclusions, which take precedence.

3.1.4 Financial eligibility

The following financial conditions apply for proposals to be eligible:

- **TRACK A - Infrastructure deployment**: The total budget per project may not exceed **€300.000 (three hundred thousand Euros)**.
- **TRACK B - Infrastructure software extensions:** The total budget per project may not exceed **€60.000 (sixty thousand Euros)**.

The total amount requested (not exceeding the amounts specified above for Track A and Track B) must represent **100% of the total project costs**. These include personnel costs, other direct costs (such as travel, consumables, equipment) and indirect costs (which must represent 25% of the total project costs and be included in the total project costs). All proposals must provide justifications of the planned costs and resources of the project.

For approved projects, the funds will be disbursed in lump sums at the end of each stage and pending the successful delivery of reports detailing the achievement of agreed milestones (see Section 8 - "Funds, Reporting and Payment").

3.1.5 Feasibility assessment

All applicants are required to carry out a feasibility assessment of their project. To be eligible, applicants must have completed and submitted the feasibility form on the F6S platform to verify alignment with the technical features available in the context of the Open Call. A submission of a full proposal without having completed the feasibility assessment process will result in the proposal being disqualified.

3.1.6 Conflict of interest

Applications will not be accepted from entities who are partners (beneficiaries) or affiliated entities/ linked-third parties in the 6G-PATH consortium or who are formally linked in any way to them. Any entity with a previous formal and legal connection to a 6G-PATH beneficiary (e.g., spin-off), will not be accepted, unless a minimum of two (2) years (as of 1 January 2024) has passed since the termination of the link.

Applicants must not have any current and/or potential conflict of interest with the 6G-PATH – Open Call #1 selection process and during the whole programme. Applicants must formally and immediately notify the

6G-PATH coordinator of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation.

All cases of conflict of interest will be assessed case by case. Applicants must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective evaluation and implementation of the project is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ("conflict of interests").

If a conflict of interest is discovered and confirmed at any time of the evaluation process, the proposal will be considered as non-eligible and disqualified.

3.1.7 Other eligibility conditions

Each applicant must confirm that:

- It is not under liquidation or is not an enterprise under difficulty according to the *European Commission Regulation No 651/2014, art. 2.18*.
- Has not been declared bankrupt or have initiated bankruptcy procedures.
- Has not convictions for fraudulent behaviour, other financial irregularities and unethical or illegal business practices.
- It is not excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law, or by a decision of both national and EU authority.

Each applicant must confirm that the proposed project:

- Is based on original research/ ideas and, going forward, any foreseen developments are not limited by third party rights, or are clearly stated if they are limited.
- Has not have received EU public funds for the same work (double funding).

***Note**: Third parties receiving financial support from 6G-PATH through the Open Call will not become part of the 6G-PATH Grant Agreement (GA). The 6G-PATH GA will not need to be amended to include the selected beneficiaries.*

4 General conditions

4.1.1 Means of submission

The 6G-PATH pages on the F6S platform will be the entry point for the submission of all proposals to the 6G-PATH – Open Call #1, specifically:

- **Feasibility check form**: apply *here*.
- **TRACK A - Infrastructure deployment**: apply *here*.
- **TRACK B - Infrastructure software extensions:** apply *here*.

Any proposal submitted through other channels will be automatically rejected. Any documentation that is required and requested by the 6G-PATH consortium should be submitted via a dedicated channel that will be indicated by the consortium during the execution of the sub-granted projects.

4.1.2 Language

English is the official language for the 6G-PATH Open Calls. Submissions done in any language other than English will not be eligible or evaluated. English is the only official language during the whole implementation of the 6G-PATH programme. Any submission of documentation, report and deliverables must be done in English to be eligible.

4.1.3 Data protection

To process and evaluate applications, the 6G-PATH consortium will need to collect personal and industrial data. F6S Network Ireland Limited (F6S) will act as Data Controller for data submitted through the F6S platform for these purposes. Please see the privacy policy *here*.

A Data Protection Officer (DPO) has been appointed by F6S to ensure compliance with data protection regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and that personal data is collected, processed, and stored in a secure manner.

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. Each applicant will accept the F6S terms to ensure compliance. Please refer to F6S platform's privacy policy and data security *policy*.

Apart from the F6S platform, data will also be stored in the F6S Google Drive, and in the project repository (NextCloud-based) managed by the project's technical coordinator OneSource Consultoria Informatica Lda (ONE).

Please note that the 6G-PATH consortium must retain generated data until five years after the balance of the 6G-PATH project is paid or longer if there are ongoing procedures (such as investigations or litigation). In this case, the data must be kept until the end.

4.1.4 Origin of the funds

Applicants selected for funding will sign a dedicated sub-grant funding agreement with the 6G-PATH consortium. The funds attached to the sub-grant funding agreement come directly from the funds of the European project 6G-PATH and therefore remain property of the EU and the SNS JU until the payment of the balance, whose management rights have been transferred to the project partners in 6G-PATH via the EC GA no. 101139172.

As detailed in Annex 3: Sub-grant funding agreement, the relation between the sub-grantees and the EC and SNS JU through the 6G-PATH project carries a set of obligations to the sub-grantees with the EC and SNS JU. It is the task of the sub-grantees to achieve them and of the 6G-PATH consortium partners to inform about them.

5 Submission, selection, and negotiation process

The 6G-PATH – Open Call #1 launches on **23 September 2024**. The deadline for submission of proposals is **21 November 2024, 17:00 CET** (Brussels time). The feasibility assessment closes on **6 November 2024**.

Proposals submitted to the 6G-PATH – Open Call #1 will follow the steps represented in Figure 2 below.

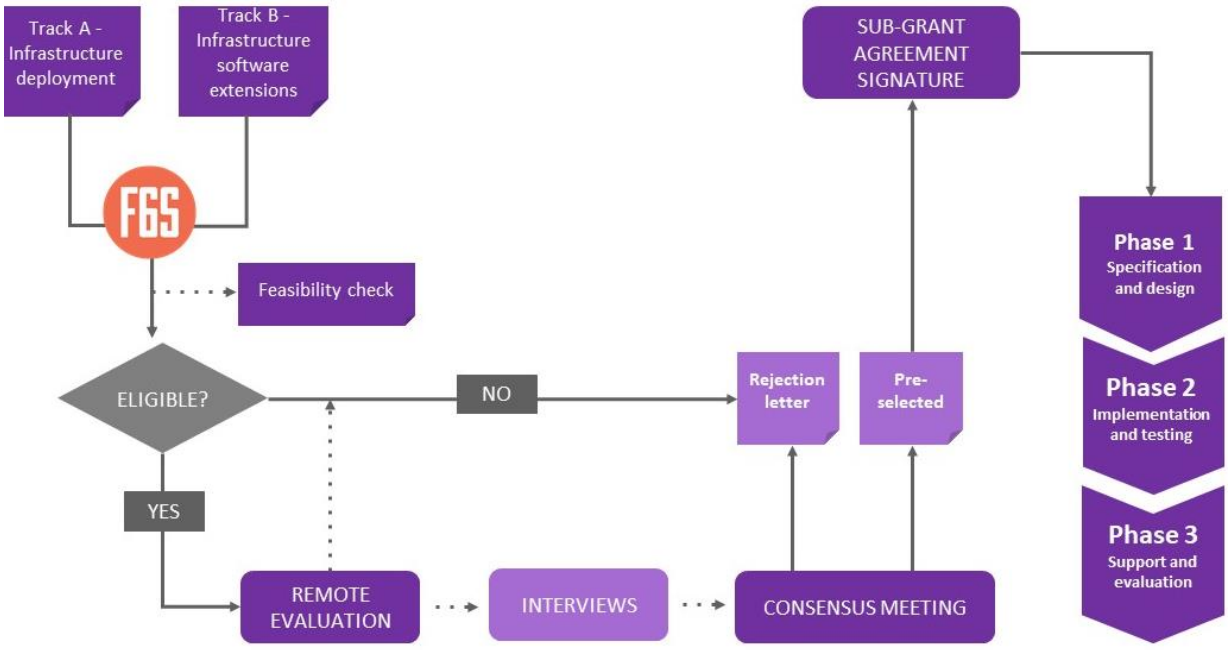

Figure 2. 6G-PATH Open Call #1 submission and evaluation process

5.1 Proposal preparation and submission

5.1.1 Proposal preparation and submission

Entities interested in submitting a proposal to the 6G-PATH – Open Call #1 must be registered on the *F6S platform*, which will be the interface for managing the proposals.

Applicants are required to apply online through the F6S page dedicated to the 6G-PATH – Open Call #1, accessible *here*. Submissions provided by any means other than F6S will not be accepted. The information and documentation to be provided/ submitted are:

- **Feasibility check form**: includes the administrative questions to be completed directly on the F6S platform, specific to the Feasibility assessment process. Apply *here*. *Note: A feasibility form must be submitted before proceeding with the full application.*
- **Full application form**: includes the administrative questions and application to be completed directly on the F6S platform. Apply *here*. *Note: The full application should only be submitted after completing and receiving feedback to the feasibility assessment.*
- **Selection of the TRACK (A or B)** that the proposal will address.
- **Annex 2.1 - Feasibility Assessment Form.**
- **Annex 2.2 - Technical Proposal.**
- General questions for statistical purposes.
- Tick boxes for the applicants to confirm that they have read and agree with the conditions defined in this Guidelines for Applicants and the 6G-PATH – Open Call #1.

Applicants should also consider the following carrying out the submission of proposals:

- It is strongly recommended that applicants submit their proposal well before the deadline. If the applicant discovers an error in the proposal, and if the call deadline has not passed, the applicant may request the 6G-PATH team to re-submit the proposal (for this purpose please contact (*support@f6s.com*). **However, 6G-PATH does not guarantee that a resubmission will be feasible in due time in case the request for resubmission is not received at least forty eight (48) hours before the deadline.**
- The Open Call deadline will not be extended unless a major problem with the F6S platform makes the system unavailable. In case an extension is provided, all applicants will be notified.
- The failure to submit a proposal on 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.

5.1.2 Documentation

Before proceeding with the submission, applicants are recommended to become familiar the following relevant Open Call documentation, which can be found at: *https://6gpath.eu/open-calls-1-join-the-innovation-journey-with-6g-path/*.

- Annex 1: Guidelines for applicants (the present document).
- Annex 1.2: OC Technical Annex.
- Annex 2.1: Feasibility Assessment Form, a Word template that indicates all the technical information that should be provided in order to verify the feasibility of the proposal within the 6G-PATH – Open Call #1.
- Annex 2.2: Technical proposal, a Word template to be uploaded that describes the project and is structured into multiple mandatory sections. The template has a maxim number of pages to be respected in order to be considered eligible.

In case of selection, the following additional documents must be provided to prepare and finalise the contract to enter the funding programme:

- Annex 3: Sub-grant agreement (template), which provides a template of the sub-grant agreement that the successful applicants will be requested to sign.
- Annex 4: Declaration of Honour.
- Annex 5: Consortium Declaration of Honour.
- Annex 6: SME Declaration (applicable only to entities that are SMEs).
- Annex 7: Bank account information, which collects information about the bank account to which payments will be made.

5.2 Feasibility Assessment

As part of the eligibility criteria, **all applicants are required to carry out a feasibility assessment**. The assessment involves completing and submitting the *feasibility form on the F6S platform* before submitting the full proposal. **Failure to complete this step will result in the proposal being deemed ineligible for assessment.**

The purpose of the feasibility assessment ahead of submitting a full proposal is to verify if the project is aligned with the technical features and requirements of the Open Call. Applicants are advised to refer to Annex 1.2 - OC Technical specifications for the requirements.

In case of a consortium, the feasibility assessment must be submitted by the Lead Partner.

Applicants must consider the feedback received from the 6G-PATH team following the feasibility assessment and make the necessary adjustments before submitting their complete application.

5.2.1 Step 1: Feasibility assessments submission

1. **Submission via the F6S Platform:** applicants must initiate the process by creating an F6S account, if not already done.
2. Subsequently, access the *feasibility assessment form* and fully complete all required fields and submit the form.
3. **Identification of the Track:** applicants are required to specify the track (Track A or Track B) to which they will submit their proposal as part of the 6G-PATH – Open Call #1 process.

5.2.2 Step 2: Internal assessment and communication

1. **Assessments by internal evaluators:** the submitted forms will be assigned to the 6G-PATH internal evaluators who will review and provide feedback as follows:
   - **Feasible**: the project specifications are fully aligned with the 6G-PATH technical components; the applicant may proceed with the submission of a full application.
   - **Not feasible**: the project specifications are not aligned with the technical components; the 6G-PATH consortium will provide feedback about possible adjustments to be made to better align the proposed project with the Open Call; the applicant may then proceed with the submission of a full application.
2. **Timeline for feedback:** feedback on the feasibility assessment will be provided to all applicants within 8 working days from the submission of the feasibility form.
3. **Deadline for feasibility assessments:** feasibility forms can be submitted **until 6 November 2024.** After this date, no further feasibility forms will be accepted, and the form will be closed.

5.3 Proposal evaluation and selection

5.3.1 Step 1: Eligibility verification

An initial eligibility verification will be done to filter out and discard non-eligible proposals.

A proposal is only considered eligible if it meets **all the eligibility criteria** listed in Section 3 and if the proposal has previously submitted the feasibility assessment form.

The eligibility check enables the creation of a shortlist of proposals to be evaluated in the next step of the evaluation process. Proposals marked as non-eligible (for not meeting one or more of the eligibility criteria) will receive a rejection letter with a justification.

5.3.2 Step 2: Remote external evaluation

Proposals considered eligible will move on to the remote external evaluation step. The remote external evaluation will be done by expert evaluators.

The evaluators will be selected from a pool of experts established through a call for expressions of interest. Experts will be evaluated based on their expertise in the domains addressed by the Open Call, as well as experience in evaluations. The top-ranked experts will be invited to evaluate proposals.

Evaluators are required to be independent, impartial, and objective. All evaluators will sign a contract, which includes a declaration of confidentiality and the confirmation of the absence of conflicts of interest. Any

known conflict of interest will be immediately communicated to the 6G-PATH team. Evaluators will also be bound by strict confidentiality regarding the evaluation process and throughout the full evaluation process.

At least two external evaluators will evaluate each proposal and will be distributed considering their domains of expertise and, whenever possible, country of origin. Table 4 indicates the 6G-PATH – Open Call #1 evaluation criteria and items to evaluated.

Table 4. 6G-PATH - Open Call #1 evaluation criteria

Criteria	Description
1. Technology Concept	• Alignment of the proposal with the 6G-PATH project and the area being addressed. • Description of the proposed solution and how it is novel or not yet widely deployed. • Project objectives (general and specific). • Starting and expected Technology Readiness Level (TRL) and respective rationale.
2. Impact & Innovation Potential	• Description of ambition and a clear set of expectations aligned with the objectives of the Open Call. • Contribution to the broader goals of the 6G-PATH project in fostering industry transformation, resilience, and sustainability. • Quantitative and qualitative overview, with examples, of the long-term impact in the form of market potential and scalability. • Anticipated societal or economic benefits that the project aims to bring about. • Measures to exploit results and promote the project.
3. Implementation	• Description of the project work plan, including alignment of outcomes with proposed objectives. • Proposed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), emphasising that these will be refined and expanded in Phase I, including technical and business metrics linked to project milestones that will trigger staged payments. • Description of barriers/ risks that may affect the workplan. • Description of partners' participation in the different workplan activities. • Detailed description and completed table on rationale for project costs, including information on the team and other resources. Proposals must explicitly define how milestones, linked to KPIs, will trigger staged payments. Budget transparency demonstrating good value for money. • Quality and appropriateness of the expected costs of the project.
4. Team Skills & Experience	• Description of the consortium's motivation to apply to this Open Call. • Description of the track record and consortium members' areas of expertise, emphasising technical capabilities crucial for the successful development of the proposed solution. • Description of the complementarity of the project partners. • Demonstration of the team's commitment to gender balance within its composition. • Description of the team's capacity, skills, and expertise to not only effectively execute the proposed plan but also the potential for scalability of the application concept. This includes extending beyond the use case implementation, both internally and externally, across various sectors and domains. • Quality and appropriateness of the allocated total person-months to the project.

Each criterion will be scored between 1 and 5. Table 5 details the scoring rationale applied to each criterion.

Table 5. 6G-PATH - Open Call #1 scoring rationale

Score	Rationale
1 / POOR	The proposal addresses the criterion in an inadequate manner or there are significant weaknesses.
2 / FAIR	The proposal addresses the criterion broadly, but there are still several weaknesses.
3 / GOOD	The proposal addresses the criterion well, but improvements are necessary.
4 / VERY GOOD	The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but some improvements are still possible.
5 / EXCELLENT	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

The final score (including for each criterion) is calculated based on the average of the scores provided by the evaluators. Therefore, final scores may be decimal. The threshold for each criterion is three (3). Any criterion with a score less than three will disqualify the proposal.

Each evaluator will record their individual assessment of each proposal using an Individual Evaluation Report. A single Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) will be prepared by the Evaluation Panel, representing opinions and scores on which the evaluators agree.

The 6G-PATH consortium ensures the fairness of the process, in line with the principles outlined in the EC's rules on proposal submission and evaluation.

5.3.3 Step 3: Ranking of proposals

At the end of the remote external evaluation process, all proposals will be ranked in a single list. The primary rule for ranking proposals will be their overall score, based on the average scores of the evaluators.

In case there are proposals in the same position, tie-breaks will be applied by giving priority to the proposals with the highest score in specific criteria, considering the following order:

- Criterion 1. Impact & Innovation Potential
- Criterion 2. Technology Concept
- Criterion 3. Implementation
- Criterion 4. Team Skills and Experience

After applying these tie-break rules, if there are still proposals in the same position, priority will be given to those with a share of women and men in the consortium that is closer to 50/50, following European guidelines on gender equality[1].

5.3.4 Step 4: Interviews phase

If required, the 6G-PATH team reserves the right to organise interviews with selected applicants to either validate the assessment done by the external evaluators or to clarify doubts regarding submitted proposals.

These interviews provide an opportunity for applicants to present and elaborate on specific aspects of their proposals, fostering a more interactive and collaborative evaluation process.

The interviews will focus on better understanding the following proposal aspects: (1) proposed project concept, (2) team skills & competence, (3) capacity to implement and; (4) willingness to exploit the results.

[1] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ffcb06c3-200a-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-232129669

If during the interviews the applicants cannot adequately justify and commit to what has been presented in the proposal, these will be disqualified. The applicants will receive a report with a justification of the result.

5.3.5 Final Selection

The two (2) top-ranked proposals under TRACK A and ten (10) proposals under TRACK B will be invited to the contract negotiation phase. An additional set of three (3) proposals will be kept on a reserve list.

All applicants at all stages of the evaluation will be informed about the result of their evaluation along with an ESR.

5.4 Redress process

Within three (3) working days of receiving (1) a rejection letter informing the proposal as non-eligible or (2) an ESR of non-acceptance, an applicant may submit a request for redress if they believe the results of the eligibility checks have not been correctly applied, or if they feel that there has been a shortcoming in the way their proposal has been evaluated.

In such a case, an internal review committee from 6G-PATH will examine the applicant's request for a redress. The committee's role is to ensure a coherent interpretation of such requests, and equal treatment of applicants. Requests for redress must:

- Be related to the evaluation process or eligibility check.
- Clearly describe the complaint (in English).
- Sent by the entity's 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 general evaluation and/or eligibility checking process. The committee will not question the scientific or technical judgement of the evaluators.
- A re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that affects the final decision on whether to fund the proposal 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.

All requests for redress will be treated in confidence and must be sent to the 6G-PATH team at: *opencall@6gpath.eu*.

5.5 Administrative check and contracting

After concluding the evaluation phase, representatives of the selected proposals will be invited to the contracting phase.

Contract preparation will run through an administrative and financial check (and potentially into technical or ethical/security negotiations) based on evaluators' comments. On a case-by-case basis, a phone call or teleconference may be required with a selected project to clarify specific questions.

The objective of the contract preparation is to fulfil the legal requirements between the 6G-PATH consortium and each beneficiary of the Open Call. The items covered are presented in Table 6.

It should be emphasised that each participating entity should provide at contract preparation time a valid VAT[2]. Failure to provide a valid VAT number will automatically result in exclusion from the contract preparation.

Table 6. 6G-PATH - Open Call #1 requirements for contract preparation

Requirement	Description
Proof of Legal Existence	Company register, official journal 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).
Specific to SMEs	Proof of the SME condition is required: ● If the applicant has been fully validated as an SME on the Beneficiary Register of the EC Participant Portal, the PIC number must be provided. ● Provision of the signed (with a valid e-signature) SME declaration (Annex 5): in the event the beneficiary declares being non-autonomous, the balance sheet and profit and loss account (with annexes) for the last period for upstream and downstream organisations is required. A Status Information Form may be requested, which 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. ● Supporting documents. In cases where either the number of employees 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.
Declaration of Honour	One document per entity of the consortium, signed by the legal representative of the entity.
Consortium Declaration of Honour *[if applicable]*	One document for the consortium, signed by the legal representative of each entity of the consortium.
Bank Account information	The account where the funds will be transferred will be indicated via a specific form signed by the entity, individuals, and the bank owners. The holder of the account will be the entity/ individual. Provided using Annex 7.
Sub-grant agreement	Signed between the 6G-PATH consortium, represented by its coordinator (OTE) and the beneficiary. The sub-grant agreement will also include the comments (if any) of the proposal's ESR to the work plan.

***Note**: The contract as provided to the sub-grantee is final and may not be changed, including the addition or removal of any articles or other content.*

The request of the above listed documentation by the 6G-PATH consortium will be sent to the project representatives, including deadlines by which information and documentation should be sent. In general, the negotiation should be concluded within two (2) weeks. An additional period may be provided by the 6G-PATH coordinator in case of a relevant 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 to initiate the contract preparation.

[2] http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/vies/

At the end of the contract preparation and negotiation phase, the sub-grant agreement (Annex 3) will be signed between the 6G-PATH consortium represented by its coordinator (OTE) and the Lead Beneficiary.

Use of qualified signatures

All documentation that requires a signature (e.g., Declaration of Honour, SME Declaration (if applicable), Bank Account, and sub-grant agreement must be signed with a valid electronic digital signature[3].

The EC proposes a *demo of DSS* (Digital Signature Services), a tool that enables the signature of documents. More information about qualified digital signatures is available *here*.

6 Implementation phases

An overview of the implementation phases of the funding programme, including duration and dates, is provided below and illustrated in Figure 3. Note that dates are tentative and may be subject to modification.

TRACK A

The projects awarded under **Track A** will start in February 2025 and have an implementation period of 20-months: eight (8) months of integration and twelve (12) months of support, divided into three (3) phases:

1. **Specification and design: 2 Months**
2. **Implementation and Testing: 6 Months**
3. **Support and evaluation 12 Months**.

TRACK B

The projects awarded under **Track B** will start in February 2025 and have an implementation period of 20-months: six (6) months of integration and fourteen (14) months of support, divided into three (3) phases:

1. **Specification and design: 2 Months**
2. **Implementation and testing: 4 Months**
3. **Support and evaluation: 14 Months**

6G-PATH	2024				2025												2026								
Open Call 1	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Publication & Recruitment																									
Assess & Contract																									
TRACK A: Infrastructure deployment						Design *2 months*		Testing *6 months*						Support *12 months*											
TRACK B: Infrastructure extensions						Design *2 months*		Testing *4 months*				Support *14 months*													

Figure 3. Timeline of the Open Call process

7 Assistance programme

The awarded sub-granted projects will benefit from and assistance programme. This includes an onboarding meeting, a training scheme and a mentoring process stretched along the entire project implementation period.

Both tracks will have different design, integration and support periods. 6G-PATH will provide a programme of activities from both technical and business perspectives, with the aim of supporting the selected projects to achieve their objectives and maximise their impact in key areas.

[3] This includes: Simple Electronic Signatures (SES), Advanced Electronic Signatures (AES), Qualified Electronic Signatures (QES).

The main objective of this programme is to provide the funded projects with value-added services to ensure the successful development of their projects. This is achieved through activities such as specialised training, group coaching, general webinars, and other resources to strengthen participants' skills and knowledge.

In addition, **a Patron will be identified for each project, which aims to maximise the capacity and reach of the initiatives funded under the programme. This collaboration will enable projects to receive specialised guidance and support, which will help them overcome challenges and reach their full potential.**

The programme is committed to ensuring the continuity of third-party actions through the implementation of sustainability plan activities. This involves establishing measures and actions that enable the selected projects to continue their development and operation after the end of the initial funding phase. Therefore, mutual learning and exchange between the beneficiaries of the Open Call is encouraged. Through collaborations, meetings, workshops and events, an environment of cooperation and joint learning is promoted, where projects can share lessons learned, best practices and know-how.

- **Financial support**: Projects will be provided with financial support to carry out the work detailed in their proposals.
- **Business support**: Projects will be offered comprehensive business guidance and support services in the form of mentoring, coaching, and networking opportunities. The aim is to help beneficiaries to develop robust business models, refine their value proposition, and navigate the complexities of the B5G/6G domain and industries.
- **Technical support**: Projects will be provided specialised guidance and assistance to integrate the solutions in the different tech components developed by the consortium. This support will be provided through tailored workshops, one-on-one consultations.

8 Funds, Reporting and Payment

8.1 Project costs

Projects will be paid following a lump sum approach, meaning that payments are based on the achievement and positive evaluation of outcomes, deliverables and milestones. The awarded grants will cover 100% of the costs. The activities that qualify for the financial support to third parties are:

- Personnel costs associated with: (1) the participation in 6G-PATH activities, events and trainings; (2) work performed in the use-cases facilities; and (3) cross-collaboration with industry partners.
- Travel costs for meetings with 6G-PATH partners, industry partners and relevant participation in events/ conferences associated with the project.
- Software, hardware, and data costs that are justified for the needs of the project implementation.
- Access to and use of infrastructure that is justified for the needs of the project.
- The subcontracting of services must be: (1) defined in the application; (2) aligned with the purpose of the project. and; (3) not delivered by any of the 6G-PATH partners.
- Audio/visual products and other communication activities related to the project.
- Promotion of services and the 6G-PATH project.

8.2 Reporting and payments

Beneficiaries of the sub-granted projects are required to submit a report at the end of each implementation phase. The report will serve as a tool for monitoring the performance and evaluate the project at the end of each phase. The report will consist of a table with the achievements in that period and the corresponding description, which might be complemented with an interview with the Patron.

The submission and approval of the report will trigger the payment associated with each stage after having verified the achievement of the milestones set for the period. Funding will be distributed in three instalments as follows:

- Project launch and pre-financing: 20%, upon approval of the Design report.
- Mid-term review and second payment: 30%, upon approval of the Technical report.
- Last review and third payment: 50%, upon approval of the Support report.

Any project that underperforms in either phase will be disqualified from the project and no further payments will be released.

8.3 Additional reporting and requirements

At any moment during the 6G-PATH programme and after the applicant ends its activities, the 6G-PATH consortium may require additional reporting and or contributions from the beneficiaries beyond those mandatory to release payments. These will be requested to ensure that the 6G-PATH project respects any specific requests from the EC, to ensure compliance with any requirements internal to a 6G-PATH partner, or to support the promotion of the projects. Such requests may include, but are not limited to:

- 6G-PATH GA online meetings to present the progress.
- Details on data management practices of the beneficiaries, as part of the project they are implementing or specific to the entity.
- Information about the implementation and conclusions of the project to develop promotional materials (e.g., videos, success stories).
- Statistics on researchers and employees working on the project for the beneficiary.
- Information on planned IP measures.

9 Additional considerations

The selected entities are indirectly beneficiaries of EC funding and therefore are responsible for the appropriate use of the funding and must comply with obligations under Horizon Europe. Specific details and guidelines related to all aspects of the responsibilities of the beneficiaries are provided in the sub-grant agreement.

9.1 Responsibilities of the beneficiaries

9.1.1 Conflict of interest

Beneficiaries 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 interest”).

Beneficiaries must formally notify the 6G-PATH coordinator without delay of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interest and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation. The 6G-PATH coordinator will verify if the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specific deadline.

If a sub-granted project consortium member breaches any of its obligations, the sub-grant agreement may be automatically terminated. Moreover, costs may be rejected.

9.1.2 Checks and reviews

The EC may, at any time during the implementation of the sub-project and up to five years after the end of the sub-project, arrange for a check and review to be carried out, by external auditors, or by the EC services themselves, including the European Anti-Fraud office (OLAF). The procedure shall be deemed to be initiated on the date of receipt of the relevant letter sent by the EC.

There will be no financial checks, reviews, or audits to check costs, since beneficiaries have no obligation to document the costs incurred for the action. Checks, reviews, and audits will focus on the technical implementation of the action.

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9.1.3 Promoting and visibility of the EU funding

The beneficiary must promote the sub-project, the 6G-PATH 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.

9.2 Intellectual property rights

The results and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) developed during the sub-granted project implementation will be the exclusive property of the corresponding partner/ consortium. The applicants are advised to IPR issues and results dissemination generated from the project teams through 6G-PATH funding in their internal Consortium Agreement.

While the 6G-PATH project will support its beneficiaries in creating conditions for their solution to reach the market and have a commercial potential, it is also expected that the beneficiaries contribute with open results. Therefore, while the results and IPR remain the property of the beneficiaries, these are encouraged to make available in open source all or parts of the code/ algorithms behind the solution.

9.3 Confidentiality and Data Protection

9.3.1 Application stage

A complete list of applicants will be prepared containing their basic information for statistical purposes and clarity, which will be also shared with EC for transparency. The applicants' list will not be public but will serve as statistics in project communication materials.

9.3.2 Evaluation stages

To process and evaluate proposals, 6G-PATH will need to collect personal and industrial data. F6S Network Ireland Limited (F6S) will act as a Data Controller for data submitted through the F6S platform. The F6S platform's system design and operational procedures ensure that data are managed in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). Each applicant will accept the F6S terms to ensure coverage.

6G-PATH may share the proposals with selected external reviewers, with whom a contract and non-disclosure agreements are signed to protect the confidential information given by the applicants. Please note that 6G-PATH requests the minimum information needed to deliver the evaluation procedures or the implementation of the funding programme. Further legal and financial information will only be requested if the consortium entities are accepted in the programme.

The final list of the awarded projects and beneficiaries will be made public, including the name of the projects, abstract, legal name of the entity, type of entity, country of origin, and projects' results, duration, and budget.

9.3.3 Implementation stages

During the implementation of the 6G-PATH – Open Call #1 activities and for five years after the end of the programme activities, the parties must keep confidential any data, documents, invoices or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential information in the sub-grant agreement signed between the selected applicants and the 6G-PATH project coordinator on behalf of the 6G-PATH consortium.

If a selected applicant requests it, the EC and the 6G-PATH consortium may agree to keep such information confidential for an additional period beyond the initial five years. This will be explicitly stated in the sub-grant agreement.

If the information has been identified as confidential during the 6G-PATH programme or only orally, it will be considered to be confidential only if this is accepted by the 6G-PATH 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 Sub-Grant Agreement.

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10 Contact information

All the information on the 6G-PATH project and Open Call is available on:

- The project *website*, where all official documents are published.
- The online Q&A and *discussion forum* on the F6S Platform
- 6G-PATH Open Call Helpdesk: *opencall@6G-PATH.eu*
- Feasibility assessment form (F6S): *https://www.f6s.com/6g-path-open-call-1-feasibility*
- Full application form (F6S): *https://www.f6s.com/6g-path-open-call-1*

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