



Tourban

Call for the Selection of Tourism SMEs to be
Awarded Financial Support
GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION TO THE
**Sustainable Urban Tourism
Acceleration Programme**

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[**Extended Deadline for submission:** 10th of November 2021 at 17:00 CEST
(Brussels time)]



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These guidelines set out the rules for submission, selection and implementation of the projects financed under this call, in conformity with the Call for Proposals (GRO/SME/19/C/077) particularly Sections 12.1f and 12.2. The conditions to award financial support to third parties are laid down in Article 11a of the Model Grant Agreement.

History of changes:

Version	Date	Description of change made
1.0	16. Aug 2021	Inicial version
2.0	07. Sep 2021	Added possibility to present alternative justification for SMEs that do not dispose of a NACE code (section 3.1)
3.0	19.Oct 2021	New extended deadline

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1. The Tourban project

The present call is being launched in the framework of the [Tourban project](#), which is co-funded by the COSME programme of the European Union. Tourban (**Accelerating SMEs capacity and innovation for sustainable urban tourism**) intends to strongly contribute to foster the adaptation of European tourism companies towards more environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable business models. Tourban recognises that small businesses are the backbone of the tourism sector and as such, they are essential players in leading a transformation towards more sustainable forms of tourism, through innovation, responsiveness, efficiency and the development of specific skills and expertise.

To support tourism SMEs in taking the leadership of this transformation, Tourban aims to improve their access to **knowledge, capacity and investments** concerning sustainability. The **Sustainable Urban Tourism Acceleration Programme** contributes to this **3-steps approach** (knowledge – capacity - investments) by providing technical and financial support to tourism companies for their sustainability transition.

The project started on 16 September 2020 and has a duration of 30 months. The total budget amounts to € 1,327,777 co-financed at a 75%-rate by the COSME programme. **€ 600,000** out of the project budget are dedicated to SMEs in the form of direct financial support.

Tourban brings together the following eight partners from seven European cities:

1. Barcelona Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Services and Navigation (BCC) – Barcelona, SPAIN
2. B.Link Barcelona Strategic Projects S.L. (B.Link) – Barcelona, SPAIN
3. Institute for Tourism Research in Northern Europe (NIT) – Kiel, GERMANY
4. Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KODA) – Tallinn, ESTONIA
5. Breda University of Applied Sciences (BUAS) – Breda, NETHERLANDS
6. City of Dubrovnik Development Agency (DURA) – Dubrovnik, CROATIA
7. Creative Business Network (CBN) – Copenhagen, DENMARK
8. Hungarian Hospitality Employers' Association (VIMOSZ) – Budapest, HUNGARY

It is a pan-European initiative concentrating efforts in the following **cities**: Amsterdam, Barcelona, Copenhagen, Dubrovnik, Kiel, Budapest, and Tallinn, the seven Tourban pilot cities.

More information about Tourban is available on the **project website**: <https://www.tourban.eu/>

1.2. Urban challenges¹

As many other tourism destinations around the world, the seven Tourban pilot cities experienced an increasing tourism pressure during the last decades. This led these cities to a confrontation between the positive impacts of having a vibrant tourism sector as a driver of socio-economic development and the negative impacts associated with overtourism and unbalanced tourism development.

Nevertheless, the entire sector has been abruptly disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which is having dramatic consequences on the entire tourism and travel industry. The necessary restrictions put in place

¹ BUAS (2021), *Sustainable urban tourism: challenges, best practices and transforming initiatives for cities and SME managers*. <https://www.tourban.eu/library/>

to mitigate the health crisis and to contain the spread of the virus resulted in limited possibilities for people to travel and sometimes required temporary closures of tourism businesses. This means tourism destinations and businesses went from facing issues concerning overtourism to a situation of limited or even absence of tourism.

As mentioned by Higgins-Desbiolles (2020)², the Covid-19 pandemic polarised tourism academics and professionals into two different positions: one sees tourism going back as soon as possible to ‘the previous normal situation’, while the other considers the Covid-19 crisis as “an opportunity to critically reconsider tourism’s growth trajectory and to question the logic of more arrivals implying greater benefits” (Gössling et al., 2020, p. 13)³. In both cases, the mapping of urban tourism and business challenges in a pre-Covid-19 situation provides useful insights for tourism SMEs, both as knowledge and awareness regarding challenges that might come back soon and to critically reflect on mistakes that have been done in the past and could be avoided in the future.

Next to some basic research on the main challenges urban tourism businesses are facing in the transformation towards sustainability, Tourban has gathered a collection of **‘transforming initiatives’ (on destination level) and ‘best practices’ (on business level)** initiated or already implemented in the Tourban pilot cities, which are contributing to more sustainable forms of urban tourism. They are described in detail in the Report *‘Sustainable urban tourism: challenges, best practices and transforming initiatives for cities and SME managers’* (BUAS, 2021)⁴, and can serve as a source of inspiration SME managers may apply for this call for proposals.

1.3. The Sustainable Urban Tourism Acceleration Programme

The Call for the Selection of Tourism SMEs to be Awarded Financial Support under the Sustainable Urban Tourism Acceleration Programme (hereafter referred to as the **‘Acceleration Programme’**) is a core element of Tourban. The programme provides direct funding and technical support to selected tourism SMEs (hereafter referred to as Beneficiaries) proposing innovative and transformative projects that tackle the urban tourism challenges identified in the seven Tourban pilot cities (Barcelona, Copenhagen, Dubrovnik, Tallinn, Budapest, Amsterdam and Kiel) and support the sustainability of their business and ecosystem.

The Acceleration Programme has been designed by Tourban experts in business development and sustainability and consists of the following main pillars:

Financial support	A grant of up to 10,000 Euros depending on the objectives and impact of the project proposed (refer to section 4 on Financial Allocation and section 3.3 on Eligibility of costs). The funding rate is 100%.
Technical support	<p>Tailored mentoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries will select a Tourban mentor from a pre-established pool of mentor profiles, who will contribute expert knowledge in the specific area of focus of the initiative, working with each SME (or partnership of SMEs) offering tailor-made coaching, training and skills development to elevate the team capabilities and

² Higgins-Desbiolles, Freya. 2020. “The ‘War over Tourism’: Challenges to Sustainable Tourism in the Tourism Academy after COVID-19.” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 29(4):551–69.

³ Gössling, Stefan, Daniel Scott, and C. Michael Hall. 2020. “Pandemics, Tourism and Global Change: A Rapid Assessment of COVID-19.” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 1–20.

⁴ BUAS (2021), *Sustainable urban tourism: challenges, best practices and transforming initiatives for cities and SME managers*. <https://www.tourban.eu/library/>

advise projects to achieve increased success, while helping them make the most out of the additional support offered by Tourban (e.g. communities of practice, peer-to-peer sessions, etc.)

- Beneficiaries will be guided through the 12-months duration of the programme by the Tourban mentor, having one-to-one sessions with their assigned mentor at least once a month. The mentor fee is covered through the financial support granted and needs to be reflected in the budget estimation (the minimum number of mentoring hours that have to be included in the Estimated Budget – Annex B is 30 hours, to cover for mentoring and reporting hours by the mentor/s) (refer to section 4.3 on the Budget Overview).

Online Community and Transnational Communities of Practice/ Groups

- Beneficiaries will form part of an **international online community**, where they can connect with peers, discuss ideas and get access to international good practices, etc. Inside the community, different **working groups, so called transnational communities of practice** are established in line with selected topics related to urban tourism sustainability. Each Beneficiary will be integrated in at least one of the groups in accordance with the specific challenges and topics addressed in their proposed project (see section 3.2).
- Inside this dedicated space in the community ('Groups'), interaction and knowledge exchange will take place among the Beneficiaries, further SMEs, and stakeholders. Each of the topics will be managed by an assigned expert advisor who will provide added-value information to the SMEs.
- Beneficiaries will furthermore be invited to participate in an online session (max. 2 h) organised in relation to the group topic and dedicated to collectively discuss and propose solutions to a specific urban tourism challenge together with other SMEs, experts and stakeholders.

Peer-to-peer sessions (training workshops)

Under each of the Communities of Practice ('Groups' in the community), through the duration of the programme at least one so-called peer-to-peer session (=training workshop) will take place related to the respective topic and containing practical information to improve the participating businesses' sustainability. Beneficiaries will participate in at least two of these virtual **peer-to-peer sessions** of their choice (approx. 1,5 h each) together with other tourism SMEs. Participation in these sessions is free of cost for all SMEs, including those not accepted or participating under the Acceleration Programme.

Possible topics covered by in the sessions are (*ONLY EXAMPLES*):

Communities of Practice (=working groups)	"Peer-to-Peer Sessions" (=training workshop)
Communication, Marketing & Sales	Storytelling and/or sales training for sustainable products or services
Visitor Engagement & Satisfaction	How to get a visitor behave sustainably?
Technology & Digitalisation	Reduce environmental impact through technology use
Smart Resource Use: Energy & Water	Control systems for resource use
Human Resources & Internal Management	How to engage my staff in sustainability?

Circular Economy & Waste Management	Life cycle analysis of products
Sustainable Destination Strategy	Sustainable product design
Accessibility & Social Inclusion	How to make my business more accesible?
Public Incentives & Access to Finance	Investor Pitching
Sustainability Certificates & Labels	Sustainability Certificates: why and which one is for me?
Design Thinking Lab and Investor Pitch	
<p>Tourban will furthermore organise two international (if possible physical) events, a Design Thinking Lab (Barcelona) and an Investor Pitch (Copenhagen). Beneficiaries will be asked to join either of the two or both activities if they wish.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the Design Thinking Lab (1-day event – approx. 6 h) small thematic groups of SMEs and additional actors will be formed and assigned a specific sustainability challenge to resolve related to their every-day business. The session will be guided by a design thinking expert who will give participants the tools and techniques at hand to address the challenges with dynamics taking advantage of creativity and collective intelligence. The innovative and new ideas reached through the process will show SMEs ways to solve the proposed challenge in their business. The event will (if possible) be organised alongside the B-Travel fair held in Barcelona in spring 2022 or another relevant tourism event (e.g. Forum TurisTIC) to give businesses the opportunity to engage in additional activities. The Investor Pitch will be organised alongside the Creative Business Cup Global Finals (BRIGHT event) held in Copenhagen every year (end of June). It is a 2-day event. There, businesses will learn from international finance coaches on the requirements of investors. They will be given the tools and knowledge at hand to be able to pitch before investor panels through e-pitching sessions and leverage additional private funding for their project. This format is especially recommended for start-up companies. Participants will be able to participate in additional activities held alongside the Creative Business Cup. <p>Travel costs for assistance to the event(s) need to be covered by the financial support granted (for an estimation of the travel cost, refer to section 4.3 and the Estimated Budget – Annex B).</p>	
Networking event in the final conference	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries will be asked to join the Final Conference, which will be held in Dubrovnik end of 2022. It is foreseen that the Final Conference will host a networking event between Beneficiaries and an exhibition of best solutions/cases. This event will increase the visibility and positioning of the participating SMEs. <p>Travel costs for participation at the event need to be covered by the financial support granted (for an estimation of the travel cost, refer to section 4.3 and the Estimated Budget – Annex B)</p>	

On the other side, SMEs selected to participate in the Acceleration Programme are expected to:

- Be motivated and committed to achieve a change towards sustainability through their proposed project and further activities under Tourban.

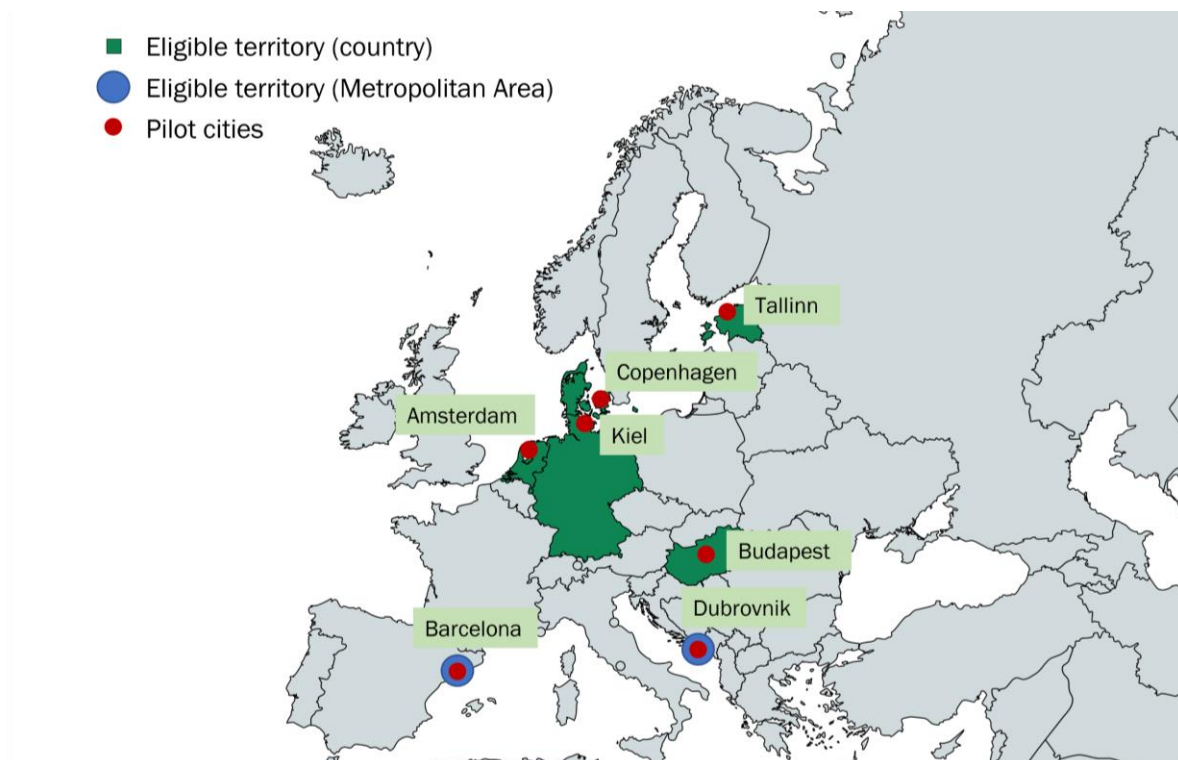
- Actively participate in compulsory Tourban activities above-mentioned (mentoring, online community, Communities of Practice, Peer-to-peer Sessions, Design Thinking Lab or Investor Pitch, Final Conference).
- Have minimum one person from their staff assigned to follow-up on the implementation of the proposed project together with the mentor. Therefore, they need to dispose of the relevant personnel capacity and availability of time.
- Commit to submit all requested information on the advancement of the implementation of their project in the established reporting procedures as detailed in the Subgrant Agreement (Contract). Basically, feedback questionnaires and brief interviews with the Tourban Consortium.

SMEs offered a grant will have their full (100%) costs covered. The participation in the call for proposals and posterior Acceleration Programme is therefore free of charge for SMEs.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The objective of this Call for proposals is to select SME beneficiaries for the Sustainable Urban Tourism Acceleration Programme, which provides financial and technical support to facilitate the uptake of sustainable solutions in urban tourism. A **minimum of 60 tourism SMEs** will be selected based on the present call for proposals and integrated in the Acceleration Programme to develop their proposed projects. Between 7 and 13 beneficiaries per country will be selected across the **7 participant countries**, namely Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Spain and the Netherlands. The selected impactful projects will contribute to build back a more sustainable and resilient European tourism sector.

Map of geographical eligibility of SMEs:





3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

This section includes all relevant information concerning eligibility criteria, which is framed in four sets relating to:

- the *applicant* (3.1);
- the type of **activities** for which the sub-grant may be awarded (3.2);
- the **costs**: Forms of financing and types of cost that may be considered in setting the amount of the subgrant (3.3).
- the **proposal** (3.4).

3.1. Eligibility of applicants

In order to be eligible for a grant, the Applicant must:

- be an SME complying with the European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC⁵ and the SME user guide⁶;

*“The first step to qualify as an SME is to be considered an enterprise. According to the definition, an enterprise is **‘any entity engaged in an economic activity, irrespective of its legal form’**. This wording reflects the terminology used by the European Court of Justice in its judgments. It is the economic activity that is the determining factor, not the legal form. In practice, this means that the **family firms, partnerships and associations or any other entity** that is regularly engaged in an economic activity may be considered as enterprises” User Guide to the SME definition.*

Note: In this regard, start-ups, micro and medium-sized enterprises, same as any other type of SME falling under this definition are encouraged to apply to the call.

- be established in one of the EU Member States of the partnership (Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, and Spain);
- be an SME based in the metropolitan urban area of the cities of Barcelona and Dubrovnik as defined/illustrated within the map for geographical eligibility under section 2, specifically as regards applicants from Spain and Croatia;
- be an SME based within the wider territorial coverage of Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, and the Netherlands, as defined/illustrated within the map for geographical eligibility under section 2;
- fall under the categories of:
 - Hotels and similar accommodation (**NACE I5510**)
 - Holiday and other short-stay accommodation (**NACE I5520**)
 - Camping grounds, recreational vehicle parks and trailer parks (**NACE I5530**)
 - Travel agency, tour operator reservation service and related activities (**NACE N79**)

Note: In effect, this requires that the SMEs’ economic activity must be registered under one of the indicated NACE codes or their corresponding national equivalents in the partnership country⁷ in order to be eligible.

In case your company falls under a different type of registry (e.g. as is the case for associations in some countries) and does not dispose of a NACE code, is however both considered an SME

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:124:0036:0041:en:PDF>

⁶ User Guide to the SME-definition: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/conferences/state-aid/sme/smedefinitionguide_en.pdf

⁷ NACE codes are the standard European nomenclature of productive economic activities. If the applicant is registered in a country that is not using NACE codes, please send an email to the FAQ inbox (info@blinkbcn.com).



and effectively operating under one of the four indicated categories, you can present your company statutes or another unequivocal alternative justification as proof.

- not be recipient of State Aid through other grants or financing support from national governments or the European Union in excess of 200.000 Euros over a period of three years. In this regard, a De minimis declaration is to be signed and submitted by selected applicants.

In addition, the Applicant:

- Has not received financial support under other Call for Proposals under GRO/SME/19/C/077 (projects: CEnTOUR, TouriSME, Eco-Tandem, ETGG2030, Sustour);
- Has not been declared bankrupt or have initiated bankruptcy procedures;
- Has no convictions for fraudulent behavior, other financial irregularities, unethical or illegal business practices;
- Is not under liquidation or an enterprise under difficulty accordingly to the Commission Regulation No 651/2014 art. 2.18.

In the **declaration of honour** (Annex C) included in the application form, the applicant must declare that it is not in any of these situations.

SMEs must apply individually.

3.2. Eligibility of activities

Topics

Building upon the urban challenges analysis done during the initial phase of Tourban project and the resulting report on *Sustainable urban tourism: challenges, best practices and transforming initiatives for cities and SME managers* (BUAS 2021), Tourban has identified **4 specific compulsory topics** to advance in the sustainability of urban tourism SMEs, and **6 horizontal topics** contributing to the goal.

Activities proposed in the SMEs' project must therefore relate to **at least one** of the below-listed **compulsory topics** and at least one subtopic, as defined :

1. Smart resource use: Energy and water

- Monitoring system, strategy, tool, data collection and recommendations for resource use and saving
- Analyses relating to energy efficiency or renewable energies
- Environmental impact measuring (e.g. Carbon footprint analysis)

2. Circular economy and waste management

- Supply chain or operations management (incl. e.g. strategy for use of more sustainable products/ supplier portfolio) and adaptation of related processes
- Waste management, recycling, and food waste reduction strategies and adaptation of related processes
- Elaboration of approaches for collaborative economy models
- Environmental impact measuring (e.g. Life cycle analysis)

3. Sustainable destination strategy

- Co-residence in between locals and tourists and interaction with local community
- Design of sustainable products (e.g. visitor spreading, local consumption, sustainable transport)
- Strategies related to the use of carbon off-setting tools



- Development of joint initiatives and collaborations with other companies/organisation that offer sustainable tourism experiences
- Corresponding adaptation of services or products

4. Sustainability certificates and labels

- Sustainability certification (incl. accompaniment for acquisition of certification and necessary compliance adaptations incl. adaptation of procedures, documentation, data collection, standardisation, etc.)

Applicants may also include activities concerning one or more of the below-listed **horizontal topics**, **provided that such horizontal topics/activities relate to one or more of the compulsory topic/s chosen (optional):**

A. Communication, marketing and sales

- Communication strategies and tools for sustainability (e.g. storytelling, avoidance of greenwashing, etc.)
- Sustainability marketing and sales strategies and tools (incl. digital marketing, branding, inbound marketing, e-mail marketing, SEO, UX and UI, etc.)

B. Human resources and internal management

- Staff engagement and motivation for sustainability
- Internal sustainability training and awareness raising
- Strategies for increase of diversity and gender equality
- Sustainable leadership/training of management
- Adaptation of internal processes

C. Technology and digitalisation

- Cloud computing, mobile services, IoT, AI, big data applications (e.g. for facility management, sensoring, marketing strategies and revenue management, digital transformation of work space/paperless office, consumer interaction)

D. Accessibility and social inclusion

- Accessibility of buildings and/or services (incl. online accessibility)
- Collaborations with or for disadvantaged collectives (people with disabilities, minorities, LGBTQ, drug users, elderly, NEETs, etc.)
- Social impact measuring

E. Visitor engagement and satisfaction

- Campaigns and events for awareness raising in sustainability
- Customer satisfaction evaluation and strategies linked to sustainability
- Development of interactive services and activities, involvement of visitors/ customer into sustainability development
- Adaptation of services or products

F. Access to finance and incentives

- Access to public subsidies and incentives (e.g. energy efficiency, building renovation, renewable energies, sustainable mobility)
- Strategies for social finance/ethic banking and impact investing

Types of activities

In resume, the list of eligible activities under the Acceleration programme is as follows:

Compulsory:

- Activities linked to minimum one of the following compulsory topics: Smart resource use: Energy and water; Circular economy and waste management; Sustainable destination strategy; Sustainability labels and certificates.
- Mentoring for a minimum of 30 hours linked to minimum one of the compulsory topics.
- Participation in minimum 2 peer-to-peer online sessions/ training workshops (1,5h each);
- Participation in minimum 1 thematic group inside of the Tourban online community (“Communities of practice”)⁸ and a related online session (2h);
- Participation at the Investor Pitch in Copenhagen (2022) or the Design Thinking Lab in Barcelona (2022), or both of them;
- Participation at the Final Conference in Dubrovnik end of 2022.

Optional:

- Activities and related required services (as e.g. training, consultancy, advisory and other services) linked to one or several of the following optional horizontal topics: Communication, marketing and sales; Human resources and internal management; Technology and digitalisation; Accessibility and social inclusion; Visitor engagement and satisfaction; Access to finance and incentives, provided that such horizontal topics/activities relate to one or more of the compulsory topic/s chosen before (Smart resource use: Energy and water; Circular economy and waste management; Sustainable destination strategy; Sustainability labels and certificates).

Note that the main focus of the proposed project needs to lie on one (or several) of the compulsory topics, whereas the horizontal topics should play a secondary role. On budgetary terms this means that at least 75% of the grant amount needs to be dedicated to activities and outputs linked to the compulsory topics and activities, and only a maximum of 25% of the grant amount can be dedicated to activities and outputs linked to horizontal topics (see also: Estimated Budget – Annex B).

The financial support may not be used to finance actions which have already been completed. Financed activities cannot commence prior to the award of the financial support.

Duration

The **duration** of implementation of the proposed activities **may not exceed 12 months** (implementation will in most cases start 1st January 2022 whereas implementation for all projects will end 31st December 2022).

Visibility

Subgrant applicants must comply with the objectives and priorities and guarantee the visibility of the EU financing (further details will be given for approved projects in the Tourban Beneficiaries Implementation Manual).

⁸ Note that thematic groups inside the online community link to the compulsory and cross-cutting topics listed under section 3.2. You will be invited to join the group(s) related to the topic(s) you chose for your project.



3.3. Eligibility of costs

Participation in this call for proposals and in the Acceleration Programme is free of charge for all SMEs. The financial support will be granted in the form of a lump sum on basis of a simplified cost justification. It can cover the following categories of eligible costs related to the above activities.

The list of eligible activities (see 3.2) links to eligible cost categories in the sense that all of them should be implemented with the support of the assigned mentor and (if applicable) additional consultant, expert, trainer or similar service provider.

The following cost categories are eligible and can be indicated in the Estimated Budget – Annex 3 of this call:

- **Travel and Subsistence:** Including:
 - ✓ Travel, registration and accommodation costs to participate in the Design Thinking Lab and/or Investor pitch, and in the Networking event held alongside the Tourban Final Conference (refer to section 1.3);
- **External Services:** Including:
 - ✓ Costs of advisory services to cover for at least 30 hours of the Tourban Mentor (at a fixed rate of 100 EUR per working hour) (refer to section 1.3);
 - ✓ Other consultant, expert, advisory or trainer costs related to the above-mentioned areas of interest;
 - ✓ Cost of designing communication and awareness raising campaigns, including social media campaigns.
 - ✓ Cost of software development aimed at sustainability improvements.

Staff costs, investments in physical infrastructure, equipment and consumable goods are not eligible. All project activities need to link to “intellectual” investments.

Simplified cost options for the grants financed by this call must be output-based meaning that they include costs linked to **outputs, activities and/or deliverables**.

3.4. Eligibility of the proposal

Proposals are eligible only if they meet the following criteria:

- Only **one application** per applicant can be submitted under this call for proposals. In the case of submissions by the same applicant of different proposals or multiple submission of the same proposal, only the last one received will enter the evaluation process, the rest being declared as non-eligible.
- Only proposals submitted **before the deadline** will be accepted. The deadline for this call is 20th of October 2021, at 17:00 CEST (Brussels Time). **The extended deadline for this call is 10th of November 2021, at 17:00 CEST (Brussels Time).**
- Only proposals **submitted in English** will be accepted. Submissions written in another language will not be evaluated.
- Only proposals submitted online through the F6S platform (www.f6s.com), and using the **models** annexed to these guidelines will be accepted.
- Paper/printed versions submitted by post or other means will not be accepted.
- Hand-written applications will not be accepted.



Please note that only the application form (Annex A) and the published annexes which have to be filled in (Annex B) will be evaluated. It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain all the relevant information concerning the action.

Applicants are expected to provide complete and accurate applicant information data through the F6S platform.

4. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

4.1. Financial allocation of the call

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is **EUR 600,000**. Tourban partner organisations reserve the right not to award all available funds.

4.2. Size of financial support

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following amounts:

- **Minimum amount: EUR 4,000**
- **Maximum amount: EUR 10,000**

The financial support shall take the form of a **lump sum**. Lump sums and unit rates are type of the so-called “simplified costs”, meaning that the estimated budget of the project is formulated based on the outputs, activities and deliverables of the proposed project, and then evaluated to determine its cost effectiveness. In this process, a budget adjustment might be negotiated with the applicant. Then, during the implementation of the project and at the time of justifying the requested grant amount, the verification and payment of the grant will be made based on the quality of the outputs and deliverables as well as the reports submitted, and on evidence of the attendance to compulsory activities planned in the project (signed attendance lists). If the planned results are delivered, the payment will be done. Although providing evidence on the expenditures paid (e.g. invoices) is not required, it is highly recommendable to keep and file this documentation for five years.

4.3. Budget overview

The budget is the financial proposal that reflects the work proposed by the applicant in the project, and should follow the categorical list of anticipated costs listed in the **Estimated Budget – Annex B**. In detail:

1. **Travel and subsistence costs:** a fixed rate to cover the costs of traveling and subsistence to participate in compulsory and optional Tourban activities.
2. **Services:** a fixed rate to cover the costs of mentoring, which are compulsory, and cost estimations for optional services such as training and skills development, consultancy and advisory services, and other type of external services.



Proposals with a significantly inflated 'Estimated Budget', taking into account cost efficiency considerations (refer to section 6 on Evaluation), will receive a lower score. In addition, they might be recommended for a budget adjustment during the negotiation phase.

Applicants have the possibility to submit an 'Estimated Budget' above the maximum size of financial support allowed (10,000 EUR). The additional costs included in the 'Estimated Budget' contribute to address the specific topic of the project submitted, and will not be awarded financial support. They will be covered by the applicant .

5. HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW

This section includes all the relevant information for a successful application to the Tourban Call for Proposals.

5.1. Where and how to send applications

All applicants are requested to:

- **Apply online through the dedicated page on the [F6S platform](#).** Interested applicants should create an account on the platform to be able to access the Tourban F6S call for proposals page and the application package, as this will be the main interface for managing the applications;
- Fill in the basic administrative and technical information requested in the online application form on F6S;
- Complete and submit (through F6S) the Annex A (Application Form), Annex B (Estimated Budget) and Annex C (Declaration of Honour). Applicants who fail to do so will not be considered eligible. All necessary documentation can be found under the [Tourban project website](#).

5.2. Deadline for submissions of applications

The call for proposals will be open from 16th of August 2021 to the 20th of October 2021 at 17:00 CEST (Brussels Time).

Thereafter, the submission system will be closed. It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the application. Failure to submit it on time for any reasons, including network communication 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.

5.3. Further information about applications

Questions may be sent by e-mail no later than 10 days before the deadline for the submission of applications to the following e-mail address info@blinkbcn.com, indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals. The Tourban project partners have no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date. Replies will be given no later than 5 days before the deadline for the submission of applications.

6. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

Tourban will run a transparent evaluation process. This section includes information about this process.

6.1. Check of proposal eligibility

Before assigning evaluators, each proposal eligibility is verified by the consortium. The eligibility criteria as referred in section 4 will be applied to discard non-eligible proposals.

Proposals being marked as non-eligible will get a rejection letter that will include the reasons for being catalogued as non-eligible. No further feedback on the process will be given.

6.2. Evaluation criteria

Eligible applications will be evaluated against predetermined evaluation criteria, applying predefined weighting factors and thresholds. Each proposal will be evaluated by two evaluators with experience in sustainable tourism and business development, and independent of any applicant. They will record their individual opinion of each proposal on an Individual Evaluation Report.

The evaluation will be done remotely and within F6S platform, scoring the proposals based on the following criteria:

Criterion	Weight	Score	Description
Excellence			
Challenge fit	12'5%	0 - 10	Fit of the proposal with regard to identified urban tourism challenges and the needs of the business and the industry. Extent to which the project proposal is relevant to the specific topic/s and horizontal dimension/s selected in the framework of the CfP.
Ambition	12'5%	0 - 10	The relevance of the objectives of the project and the added value to the sustainability and resilience of the business and/or urban tourism in your destination.
Innovation	12'5%	0 - 10	Degree of innovation and extent to which the project goes beyond the state of the art and/or its potential compared to existing technology and/or solutions.
Impact			
Environmental, social, economic impact	12'5%	0 - 10	Level of impact in matter of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environment - Society - Economy Contribution to the tourism sustainability of the pilot city.
Replicability	12'5%	0 - 10	Level of replicability of the solution in the tourism industry.



Implementation			
Skills and experience	12'5%	0 - 10	Profile of the tourism SME (including any relevant experience in tourism sustainability), and team capacity.
Strategy level	12'5%	0 - 10	The fit with their business model and long-term strategy.
Cost - effectiveness	12'5%	0 - 10	The project value in relation to the grant amount requested.

When the evaluators will have concluded their Individual Evaluation Report, they will communicate with each other to prepare and agree on a single 'Consensual Evaluation Report' for each application, representing opinions and scores on which both evaluators agree and which they will sign.

For each criterion marks from 0 to 10 are given. Successful proposals must pass the minimum thresholds of 5/10 at each individual criterion, while the overall threshold is 55/80. Those who pass the threshold are ranked, although passing the threshold does not mean that the project will be funded. A budgetary cut-off applies to the ranking list and only the highest ranked proposals are offered financial support until the call's budget is exhausted.

6.3. Selection

The list of selected proposals will be published and all applicants will be informed via e-mail of the evaluation results even when the proposal has not been selected. In this regard, all proposals will receive an acceptance or rejection letter together with an anonymised version of the Consensual Evaluation Report.

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 (based on the Consensual Evaluation Report);
- Rule 2: in case following rule 1 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have a higher score in "Excellence";
- Rule 3: in case following rule 2 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have a higher score in "Impact";
- Rule 4: in case following rule 3, there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have a higher representation of women in their team.

At the end, a minimum of 60 proposals will be selected according to the country representation presented in section 2, and an additional 20 proposals will remain in a reserve list.

In the event of selection of a lower number of applications and total amount of funding available, the Tourban consortium may re-open the call at a later date.

7. NEGOTIATION PROCESS

After the evaluation process is concluded and the applicants have been notified, the Tourban consortium will start the grant agreement (Contract) preparation in collaboration with the Beneficiaries' coordinator. Case by case and based on the evaluators' comments regarding the cost-effectiveness of the project, the grant agreement (Contract) will go through a negotiation process which could include a budget adjustment. In case the cost effectiveness of the proposed activities, outputs and expected results is considered unbalanced by the evaluator and the Tourban consortium members (that is, the budget is estimated too high or too low in relation to the proposed activities), the SME will be proposed an adjusted budget for its proposed project.

The objective of the grant agreement (Contract) preparation is fulfilling the legal requirements between the Tourban consortium and every Beneficiary of the Call for Proposals.

7.1. Administrative duties

To validate the status information, the following documents will be required from each Beneficiary:

- An **SME declaration form** (see Annex 1) signed and stamped (if applicable). The use of a digital signature is recommended over manual signatures, whereas both are accepted;
- A **De minimis declaration** (see Annex 2) signed and stamped (if applicable). The use of a digital signature is recommended over manual signatures, whereas both are accepted;
- In cases where the **number of employees and/or the ownership** is not clearly identified: any other supporting documentation which demonstrate headcount and ownership such as payroll details, annual reports, national/regional association records, etc.;
- **Bank account information:** The account where the funds will be transferred will be indicated via a form signed by the SME's 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 a valid VAT number at the time of the grant agreement (Contract) preparation⁹. VIES (VAT Information Exchange System)¹⁰ on-the-web will be used to verify the validity of the VAT number of the selected applicants. **Failure to provide a valid VAT number will automatically result in proposal rejection.**

The above requested documentation will have to be provided before the deadline indicated by the Tourban consortium. In general, the grant agreement (Contract) preparation should be concluded within 4 weeks after the notification of the results. In case that the negotiations have not been concluded within the above period, the application is automatically rejected and another SME applicant will be given the opportunity of acceptance.

7.2. Signature of the Grant agreement (Contract)

At the end of the negotiation, the Grant agreement (Contract) will be signed between the Tourban consortium and the Beneficiary. By signing the Grant Agreement (Contract), the Beneficiaries accept

⁹ To be checked at the European Commission services such as: https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/vies/

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/vies/faqvies.do#item_7



the grant and agree to implement the project under their own responsibility and in accordance with the agreement, with all the obligations and terms and conditions it sets out.

As regards reporting and payment arrangements, an initial pre-financing payment of 20% of the grant will be made at the latest 30 days after the entry into force of the agreement; a second payment of up to 50% of the grant will be made after the approval of a mid-term report; and a final payment for the remaining amount provided that the final report is approved, including the agreed outputs, deliverables and activities.

8. TIMETABLE

Stages	Dates
a) Opening of the call	16 August
b) Online informative session	2 September (tbc)
c) Deadline for any questions	10 October
d) Deadline for submission of applications	20 October, 17:00h CEST
New extended deadline for submission	10 November, 17:00h CEST
e) Information to applicants on the evaluation	Maximum 6 weeks after the closure of the call
f) Notification of award	Beginning of December
g) Signature of the Subgrant Agreement (Contract)	Maximum 4 weeks from the notification of the award

This Indicative timetable refers to provisional dates and may be updated by the Tourban consortium during the procedure. In that case, the updated timetable will be published on the project website.

9. PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA

The reply to this call involves recording and processing of personal data (name, address and CV). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2016/679 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data.

ANNEXES

Annex A – Application Form

Annex B – Estimated Budget Template

Annex C – Declaration of Honour