Up2Circ Guide for Evaluators

This document provides evaluators with instructions on how to assess Up2Circ applications.

In its pilot call, Up2Circ Accelerator will support 7 projects to validate the adoption of circular business models and implement concrete actions towards circular products, processes and services. The budget allocation for the pilot call is €350.000.

Call opening: September 13th, 2023

Call closure: November 15th, 2023

Online briefing: November 14th, 2023, from 10:30 to 12:00 CET

Evaluation period: from November 16th, 2023, to January 10th, 2024

Online consensus meeting: January 12th, 2024, from 13:00 to 15:00 CET

Provision of the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR): by January 15th, 2024

Content

1. About Up2Circ and its objectives

Up2Circ is a project funded by the European Commission's Horizon Europe programme with the overall objective to accelerate and scale the transition of European SMEs towards a circular economy. Up2Circ covers the entire value chain from awareness raising, education and training, tailored advisory service to funding of concrete transition projects towards a circular economy. The Up2Circ-Accelerator aims to mobilise and enable SMEs for the uptake of circular business models, circular product design and

circular processes. It accompanies SMEs with a client-centric, customised advisory approach from exploration of opportunities to concrete implementation projects along the circular strategies to narrow (use less), slow (use longer), close (use again), regenerate (make clean) and inform (use data) material and energy flows.

Up2Circ encourages the uptake of advanced technologies and social innovation as enablers and drivers of a successful transition towards a modern, digitalized, resource-efficient and competitive circular economy. Advanced technologies like new materials, digitalisation, industrial biotechnology and additive manufacturing can significantly support the transition to circularity and can increase competitiveness and resilience of enterprises as elaborated in European Industrial Strategy. Social innovation is a key driver for economic success of circular transition as it enables businesses to fully develop their human capital potential and is essential to rethink and reshape current practices of producing and consuming to enhance resource efficiency while satisfying customers' needs.

Up2Circ focuses on innovation and transformation measures that individual SMEs can realistically achieve. Up2Circ especially targets SMEs that are not aware yet how they could best innovate to transform. That is why in the Up2Circ-Accelerator capacity building comes prior to funding and active participation in the 'Up2Circ Academy' is an eligibility criterion for submission of proposals to this call.

Up2Circ Accelerator provides to selected SMEs funding of up to €15,000 for feasibility studies related to the adoption of circular business models or up to €50,000 to implement specific transition measures towards circular products, processes and services.

Evaluators are contracted by Tutech Innovation GmbH (hereinafter "Contractor") based on Up2Circ Contract for External Evaluators.

2. Your role

Each application is evaluated by 3 evaluators who work individually. Applications that receive a score above a threshold progress further, while those that do not are rejected. Successful applications are ranked in order and discussed in the consensus meeting. After consensus meeting, the best proposals are recommended for funding.

Your role is to perform the evaluation of the assigned proposals, namely:

- Assess the proposal on the basis of the following evaluation criteria set down in the Guidelines for Applicants: Concept, Feasibility and Impact.
- Provide comments for each criterion and score them on a scale from 0 to 5 (half point scores may be given).
- Carry out an ethics screening to detect if the projects proposed include ethically sensitive activities, such as recruitment of human study participants to activities that may involve risks, use of technologies that may circumvent the autonomy of human persons, or processing of personal data that may come in conflict with personal integrity.
- Submit the evaluation within defined number of calendar days commencing from the date the application is assigned and provide comments to be included in the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR).

- Participate in one online consensus meeting, together with the other evaluators, to decide on the final list of projects recommended for funding. The consensus meeting may be needed only in case the evaluators have shown significantly different opinions.
- Participate as rapporteur for selected proposals and draft the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR).

You are expected to use your technical and market expertise within your specialist field to provide objective assessments consisting of scores and justifications.

Your assessment must be in line with the eligibility criteria of the call. Knowing the eligibility criteria is a precondition for commencing your work. There will be an online briefing for evaluators to provide more information about the call objectives and evaluation process, including Q&A. The online briefing will be recorded and shared with evaluators who will not be able to participate.

The date and time of the online consensus meeting may be changed based on the availability of evaluators. The online consensus meeting may be needed only in case the evaluators have shown significantly different opinions.

3. Eligible applicants

Projects must be submitted by a single SME from EU or associated countries that has been actively involved in the Up2Circ Academy.

Only one entity per proposal will be admitted, consortia will not be considered eligible.

Applicants are not allowed to submit multiple applications for this call. Only the last submitted application will be eligible in case there is more than one application submitted by one entity.

English is the official language for open calls. Proposals must be submitted in English to be eligible.

Proposals must be complete and contain all the requested information.

The Up2Circ partners, or their affiliates or employees, are NOT considered as eligible applicants and can NOT apply for funding.

For the pilot call only SMEs with headquarters or operational site in one of the Up2Circ partner regions are considered eligible. These are:

- Metropolitan Region of Hamburg (DE, TUTECH)
- Estonia (EE, TSP)
- South Moravian region (CZ, JIC)
- Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur Region (FR, risingSUD)
- Lubelskie region (PL, LFR)
- Metropolitan City of Torino (IT, CCIAATO)
- Extremadura region (ES, FUNDECYT-PCTEX)

One project per region is expected to be funded in this call provided minimum threshold is reached.

4. Eligible activities

The types of activities that can be implemented within the financial support must focus on the uptake of circular business models, circular product design and circular processes.

SMEs can apply for two different funding schemes based on the maturity of their transition projects:

Small scale projects: Feasibility studies

Funding: small scale projects of up to €15.000

Project scope: In-depth validation of technical, economic and social aspects of adoption of circular business models, considering desirability, feasibility, viability and environmental aspects. Projects should focus on one or several circular business models such as circular supply chain, sharing platforms, product as a service, product life extension, recovery and recycling.

Expected outcome: feasibility study including a business plan

Project duration: max. 6 months

Large scale projects: Piloting and demonstration

Funding: large scale projects of up to €50.000

Project scope: Pilot and demonstration activities to implement concrete transition measures towards circularity through the implementation of certain technologies, introduction of new products, processes and services. Projects should focus on prototyping, pilot testing, implementation of new business processes, solutions and systems.

Expected outcome: validated prototype

Project duration: max. 12 months

5. Eligible costs

Although the payment will be made as a lump sum, it is necessary to explain in the application form how the lump sum will be used, including a clear budget proposal with the following budget categories:

- Personnel costs: employees or equivalent, natural persons under direct contract, seconded persons, SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
- Subcontracting costs (based on beneficiary's usual purchasing practices and ensuring best value for money and no conflict of interests)
- Purchase costs: travel and subsistence
- Purchase costs: equipment, infrastructures and other assets (calculated on the basis of the costs actually incurred and written off in accordance with international accounting standards and the beneficiary's usual accounting practices)
- Purchase costs: other goods, works and services

Indirect costs are added by applying the 25% flat rate to the direct costs that qualify for indirect costs, these are all cost categories listed above except for subcontracting.

There is no limit for subcontracting costs provided all the subcontracting costs are justified.

Only costs generated during the lifetime of the project are eligible.

6. How to evaluate applications

To perform an evaluation, you must carefully read the application and rate each sub-criterion by using a scale from 0 to 5 points (half point scores may be given):

0 = The proposal fails to address the criteria, or it cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.

1 = Poor – The criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2 = Fair – The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

3 = Good – The proposal addresses the criterion well but there are a certain number of shortcomings.

4 = Very good – There is a small number of shortcomings but overall, the proposal addresses the criterion very well.

5 = Excellent – The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion with minor or no shortcomings

Each score must be fully justified by comments.

Below are the three criteria and their sub-criteria. To evaluate them, please follow the instructions provided.

Criteria	Weight	Score
Concept: Does the project demonstrate a clear benefit to the Up2Circ objectives? • **Relevance:** Does the project demonstrate a clear transition towards a circular economy and meet the objectives of Up2Circ project? Are the objectives of the project clear and achievable? • **Novelty:** To what extend does the proposed project bring new value for the company? To what extend the project demonstrates uptake of advanced technologies and/or social innovation as enablers of circularity to implement concrete, achievable innovation measures? • *Only for large scale projects:* **Ambition:** To what extend does the proposed project demonstrate change in the transition towards a circular economy? To what extent is the proposed work ambitious?	30%	Threshold 3/5
Feasibility: Does the business have all the resources and ability to execute on the project proposition? • **Soundness of the workplan:** How relevant are the tasks described and the timing of the activities in relation to the current stage? • **Team:** Does the proposal demonstrate relevant competences and capacity to implement the project, either in-house or in cooperation with external partners including sub-contractors? Are the missing expertise and resources identified? • *Only for large scale projects:* **Risk analysis:** Does the project adequately address potential risks and propose appropriate mitigation strategies?	30%	Threshold 3/5
Impact: Can the funding make a difference to help make the business more sustainable?	40%	Threshold 3/5

• **Sustainable growth:** To what extend does the project quantify achieving circular business transformation of the company? Is the proposed transformation justified by sound KPIs[1]? • **Added value:** To what extend does the project have an impact on the relevant industrial sector or region? • *Only for large scale projects:* **Cost-effectiveness:** What is the quality and effectiveness of the resources assigned to the project to get the proposed objectives and deliverables		

The maximum overall score is 15. The standard threshold for individual criteria is 3, and the standard overall threshold, applying to the sum of the three individual scores, is 10. The average of the 3 scores per section and total will be calculated for each proposal. Priority will be given to applications that have higher scores in the criterion Impact. Proposals failing to achieve the threshold score per individual criteria and the overall threshold will be rejected.

For all proposals reaching the threshold you would carry out an ethics screening to detect if the projects proposed include ethically sensitive activities, such as recruitment of human study participants to activities that may involve risks, use of technologies that may circumvent the autonomy of human persons, or processing of personal data that may come in conflict with personal integrity. In case ethically sensitive activities are detected, SMEs receiving Up2Circ 3rd party funding will be obliged to take measures to ensure compliance with ethical principles, the applicable international and national law, and to include details about ethics compliance into their reporting.

Proposals will be ranked according to the overall scores in descending order. The ranking will be subject to an online consensus meeting with evaluators and Up2Circ project partner representatives who meets to validate the results and agree on the final list of proposals recommended for funding and a reserve list. For each proposal, one of the three evaluators assessing the proposal will be assigned to draft the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR).

The evaluation results will be available by January 17th. All applicants will be informed about the evaluation results by email.

7. Evaluator selection and deadlines

You will be contacted shortly before the submission deadline to see if you are available to evaluate applications. If you respond positively, we add you to the list of evaluators. After the submission deadline we will match the eligible applications to potential evaluators. For each project proposal you will receive an email confirming the work and inviting you to access the project documentation and accept or reject the application/s assigned to you. The deadline to accept or reject the assignments is

---

[1] We recommend that applicants should set clear and measurable objectives aligned with the following UNSDG:

SDG 13 Climate Action: Reduction of GHG emissions, e.g., striving for 55% reduction of GHG emissions by 2030 in line with the EU's "Fit for 55" and Green Deal targets

SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production: Decrease in waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse

SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth: Improvements in resource efficiency and in decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation. You can e.g., compare the decrease in consumption of primary materials with the number of jobs created and preserved or with increased turnover

SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy: Improvements in energy efficiency can be measured with a ratio of energy consumption per economic output.

communicated in the invitation email. If you accept your assignment(s), you will be asked to perform your evaluation within a set deadline. The assignment of evaluators is done on a rolling basis.

You must submit your evaluations within defined number of calendar days commencing from the date the application is assigned:

- For small scale projects (feasibility studies): within 10 days
- For large scale projects (piloting and demonstration): within 15 days

The deadline is communicated in your invitation email. Evaluations must be performed in English.

8. Conflict of interest

You must inform the Contractor immediately when recognizing potential conflict of interest in the assessment of assigned proposals, in particular if:

- You have been involved in the preparation of an application.
- You would benefit either directly or indirectly from the eventual selection of an application.
- You have a close family or personal relationship with any person representing the applicant.
- You are a director, trustee or partner or are in any way involved in the management of the applicant.
- You are employed or contracted by one of the applicant legal entities or any named subcontractors.
- You are an employee of any of the Up2Circ consortium partners.

Should a conflict of interest during the evaluation be discovered and confirmed by the Contractor, you will be withdrawn from the evaluation.

9. Confidentiality

Evaluators are required to treat information contained within applications with the strictest confidentiality and to declare any potential conflict of interest. Evaluators are responsible for ensuring and maintaining confidentiality of any data, documents or other material related to the evaluation process, during and after completion of the evaluation. In the case of a breach of those obligations, the Contractor reserves the right to suspend any payment or compensation, and in serious cases, to undertake legal action.