

ANNEX A

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

FOURTH OPEN CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Closing dates for proposals: 17 July 2024 at 17:00 CEST

Version 1.0 – 15 May 2024

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The TrustChain Consortium is the following:

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2	F6S NETWORK IRELAND LIMITED	F6S	IE
3	UNIVERZA V LJUBLJANI	UL	SI
4	ATHENS UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS - RESEARCH CENTER	AUEB	EL
5	FUNDACION CIBERVOLUNTARIOS	CIB	ES
6	CONSORCIO RED ALASTRIA	ALA	ES
7	TIME.LEX	TLX	BE
8	NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS	NKUA	EL
9	CITY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON	ICS	UK

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1 PREAMBLE

This document provides the challenges, expected outcomes and technical details important to be addressed when preparing applications for TrustChain Open Call #4. The guide is complemented by the Open Call #4 Annexes available at <https://trustchain.ngi.eu/>.

Proposed solutions should utilize existing concepts and technologies already developed for data economics and democracy and fit within TrustChain's vision and objectives. The solutions should be provided as open-source software desirably at TRL 7, tested, evaluated, and validated by an adequate pool of potential end-users that should be identified and mentioned in the application, as well as supported by a self-sustaining business model for exploiting the developed system at the end of the project. Each proposed solution will have to use the latest technologies for full-stack development that are compatible with the current standards.

The call is open for submission from 15 May 2024 to 17 July 2024 at 17:00 CEST.

2 MODALITIES FOR APPLICATION

2.1 WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS WILL BE ELIGIBLE?

Applications must be based on the Open Call #4's Proposal Description template (Annex D) and must clearly fit within the objective of TrustChain Open Call #4 described in subsection 3.3 of the Call Document.

Furthermore, applicants should demonstrate their long-term commitment to the TrustChain Research and Innovation agenda. Selected proposals will work to demonstrate that the proposed solution progresses from the beginning of the project, reaching a higher maturity level and take-up by the end of the action. Thus, all the projects must provide evidence of substantial progress with a particular focus on the interoperability and sustainability of the outcomes according to the TrustChain framework.

Following the spirit of the calls for the Next Generation Internet, the TrustChain Research and Innovation Action encourages open-source software and open hardware design, open access to data, standardisation activities, access to testing and operational infrastructure as well as an IPR regime ensuring interoperability, reusability of results, lasting and sustainable impact. If the expected results of the proposed project cannot be released as open source, it should be duly justified in the application document.

2.2 WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE PROPOSALS ARE SUBMITTED?

Immediately after the submission deadline (please see subsection 3.6) is over, the evaluation process begins (as described in detail in Section 5). Experts will evaluate proposals and score

them according to the quality of the content presented.

The goal of the process is to select up to 15 high value proposals with the procedure defined in Section 5. The selected applicants will be invited to join the TrustChain Research and Innovation Action. The exact number of selected projects will be subject to the quality of the proposals and the funding available.

3 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

All applicants will have to abide by all general requirements described in this section to be considered eligible for TrustChain. **Therefore, applicants are requested to read the following section carefully.**

3.1 TYPES OF APPLICANTS

The target applicants of this call are developers, innovators, researchers, SMEs, and entrepreneurs working on different NGI relevant topics and application domains at the intersection between the technical field (e.g., Software Engineering, Network Security, Semantic Web, Cryptography, Blockchain, Digital Twin, Blockchain Security, Digital Identity, Blockchain Protocol), the Social sciences and Humanities (e.g., Social Innovation, not-for-profit sector, Social Entrepreneurship, public goods) as well as any others including economics, environment, art, design, which can contribute to the NGI TrustChain relevant vision.

Applicants can apply as individuals or linked to a legal entity. Hence, the participation is possible in several ways:

- **Team of natural persons:**
Team of individuals, all established in any eligible country (see subsection 3.2). This does not consider the country of origin but the residence permit.
- **Legal entity(ies):**
One or more entities (consortium) established in an eligible country (see subsection 3.2). The entities can be Universities, Research centres, Non-Governmental Organisations, Foundations, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (see definition of SME according to the [European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC](#)), large enterprises working on Internet or/and other related technologies are eligible.
- **Any combination of the above.**

In addition, the following conditions apply:

- The participating entities should not have been declared bankrupt or have initiated bankruptcy procedures.
- The entities or individuals (Team of natural persons) applying should not have convictions for fraudulent behaviour, other financial irregularities, and unethical or illegal business practices.

3.2 ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES

Only applicants legally established/resident in any of the following countries (hereafter collectively identified as the “Eligible Countries”) are eligible:

- The Member States (MS) of the European Union (EU), including their outermost regions.
- The Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) linked to the Member States¹;
- Horizon Europe associated countries, as described in the [Reference Documents](#) and the [List of Participating Countries in Horizon Europe](#) according to the latest list published by the European Commission.

3.3 LANGUAGE

English is the official language for TrustChain’s Open Calls. Submissions written in any other language will be disregarded and not evaluated.

English is also the only official language during the whole execution of the TrustChain programme. This means submitted deliverables must be written in English in order to be accepted.

3.4 PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Proposals must be submitted electronically, using the **TrustChain Online Submission Service** accessible via <https://www.f6s.com>. Proposals submitted by any other means will not be evaluated.

Only the documentation included in the proposal will be considered by evaluators. It is composed by a form with administrative data (Annex C) to be completed directly in the platform and the proposal description (Annex D) attached in PDF format. **Applicants must strictly follow the proposal template provided in the annexes as well as the page limitation.**

The information provided should be actual, true, and complete and should allow the assessment of the proposal.

The preparation and submission of the proposal and other actions that follow this procedure (such as withdrawal) fall under the final responsibility of the applicant.

3.4.1 Data Protection

In order to process and evaluate applications, the TrustChain consortium will need to collect Personal and Industrial Data. F6S Network Ireland Limited, will act as Data Controller for data submitted through the F6S platform for these purposes. A Data Protection Officer (DPO) has

¹ Entities from Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) are eligible for funding under the same conditions as entities from the Member States to which the OCT in question is linked.

been appointed by F6S generally, 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 (GDPR)². Each applicant will accept the F6S terms to ensure compliance. Please refer to <https://www.f6s.com/privacy-policy> to review the F6S platform's privacy policy and data security policy.

Apart from the F6S platform, data will also be stored in the F6S Google Drive, in the project repository on MS Sharepoint, and on the EasyChair platform, both managed by the project coordinator European Dynamics.

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

3.4.2 Multiple submissions

Given the fact that this call is competitive, applicants should focus on only one specific topic as follows:

- **Only one proposal per applicant should be submitted to this call**, and only one proposal per applicant will be evaluated. In the event of multiple submissions by an applicant, only the last one received (according to the timestamp of the submission portal) will enter the evaluation process. Any other submitted proposals by the same applicant or involving the same applicant will be declared non-eligible and will not be evaluated in any case.
- **Only one proposal per individual should be submitted to this call** whether he/she applies as a member of a Team of Natural Persons or as part of a Team/Consortium. If an individual is taking part in several teams/consortiums, the members of the other teams/consortium will be informed about the participation of an individual in multiple teams/consortiums. Then, only the last proposal received (according to the timestamp of the submission portal) including the individual will enter the evaluation process. Any other submitted proposals involving this individual will be declared non-eligible and will not be evaluated in any case.

Note that the regular functioning of the F6S platform limits to one application submission per F6S user in each call. If an F6S user wishes to submit more than one application, **for example on behalf of different applicants**, the F6S user should request support from the F6S support team (support@f6s.com) at least 10 days prior to the open call deadline.

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr.html>

3.4.3 Participation to the five TrustChain's Open Calls and funding rules

TrustChain is an opportunity to fund truly multidisciplinary projects involving partners from different (natural and humanistic) disciplines relevant to Internet development. Thus, applicants can apply, participate and benefit from the five TrustChain's open calls but as the main objective of the action is to support a large number of third parties through open calls, **the maximum amount to be granted to each third party is 200,000.00 €** to allow cases where a given legal entity (e.g. large research, academic or industrial organisations) may receive several grants (e.g. from different calls).

3.4.4 Complaint due to a technical error of the TrustChain Online Submission Service

If you experience any problem with the application submission system prior to the deadline of the open call, you should contact F6S using the e-mail support@f6s.com, cc'ing the TrustChain Team (trustchain@ngi.eu), and explain your problem.

If you believe that the submission of your proposal was not entirely successful due to a technical error on the side of the TrustChain Online Submission Service, you may lodge a complaint by email to support@f6s.com cc'ing the TrustChain Team (trustchain@ngi.eu) and explain your situation. For the complaint to be admissible it must be filed within **three calendar days following the day of the call closure**. You will receive an acknowledgement of receipt, in the same or next working day.

What else to do? You should secure a PDF version of all the documents of your proposal holding a timestamp (file attributes listing the date and time of creation and last modification) that is prior to the call deadline, as well as any proof of the alleged failure (e.g., screen shots). Later in the procedure you may be requested by the TrustChain IT Helpdesk to provide these items.

For your complaint to be upheld, the IT audit trail (application log files and access log files of TrustChain Online Submission Service) must show that there was indeed a technical problem on the TrustChain consortium side that prevented you from submitting your proposal using the electronic submission system.

Applicants will be notified about the outcome of their complaint within the time indicated in the acknowledgment of receipt. If a complaint is upheld, the secured files (provided to the IT helpdesk) for which the investigation has demonstrated that technical problems on the TrustChain consortium side prevented submission will be used as a reference for accepting the proposal for evaluation.

3.5 CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information regarding the proposal will be treated in a strictly confidential manner.

3.6 DEADLINE

Proposals must be submitted before 17 July 2024 at 17:00 CEST. To avoid missing the deadline, you are encouraged to submit your proposal as soon as possible.

Only proposals submitted before the deadline will be considered for evaluation. After the call closure, no additions or changes to receive proposals will be considered.

3.7 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Applicants (even individual members of applicants) shall not have any actual or/and potential conflict of interest with the TrustChain Selection Process and during the whole programme. All cases of conflict of interest will be assessed case by case. In particular, applicants (even individual members of applicants) cannot be TrustChain Consortium partners or affiliated entities nor their employees or co-operators under a contractual agreement, nor a member of the TrustChain Advisory Board.

If a conflict of interest is discovered and confirmed at the time of the evaluation process, the proposal will be considered as non-eligible and will not be evaluated.

3.8 OTHER

Each applicant must confirm:

- It is not under liquidation or is not an enterprise under difficulty according to the Commission Regulation No 651/2014, art. 2.18,
- Its project is based on the original works and going forward any foreseen developments are free from third party rights, or they are clearly stated,
- It does not receive extra funding for the development of its proposal from any other public or private entity,
- 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 or EU authority,
- Via the principal investigator that he/she agrees with the terms presented in Annex B – Model Sub-grant Agreement draft template.

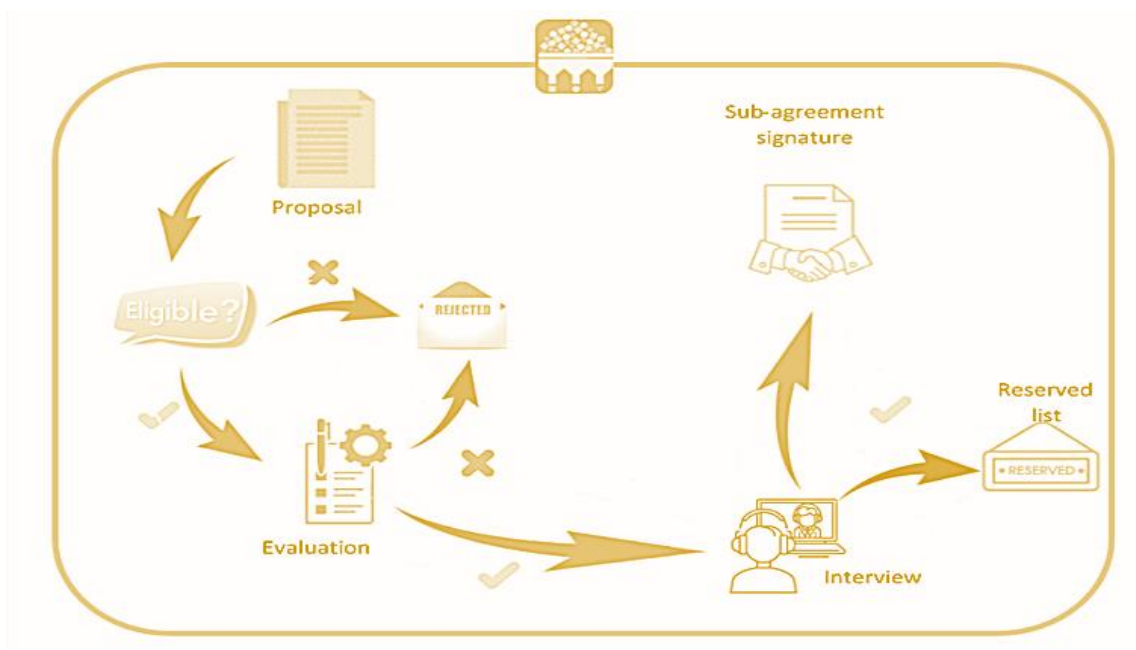
4 PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND ACCESS TO TrustChain FUNDING

4.1 EVALUATION PROCESS

Proposals are submitted in a single stage and the evaluation process is composed of three stages as presented hereafter.

- **Stage 1:** Admissibility & eligibility check

- **Stage 2:** Proposals evaluation
- **Stage 3:** Online interviews and final selection



4.1.1 Admissibility and eligibility check

Admissibility and eligibility criteria for each proposal are performed by the TrustChain Consortium staff. A proposal may be declared ineligible or inadmissible at any stage.

To be considered admissible, a proposal must:

- Be submitted in the electronic submission system before the call deadline,
- Be compliant with the specific eligibility conditions set out in the relevant parts of this guide (see Section 3). The eligibility filter enables the creation of a shortlist of proposals to be evaluated,
- Be readable, accessible and printable,
- Be completed and include the requested administrative data, and any obligatory supporting documents specified in the call (following the template presented in Annex D, compulsory, and Annex E, if necessary),
- Include the proposal description. Applicants must strictly follow the template instructions as well as the page limitations for drafting the research proposal that are included in this guide (Annex D). A proposal will only be considered eligible if its content corresponds specifically to the objective of the TrustChain Open Call #4 or is proposed as an “open topic” and demonstrates that it aims to advance the state-of-the-art especially with regards to the TrustChain Open Call #4 Framework and application domain.

4.1.2 Proposal evaluation

The evaluation of proposals is carried out by the TrustChain Consortium with the assistance of independent experts. TrustChain Consortium ensures that the process is fair and in line with the principles contained in the European Commission's rules on Proposal submission and evaluation. To facilitate the independent experts and the evaluation process, the EasyChair platform (<https://easychair.org/>) will be used.

Experts perform evaluations on a personal basis, not as representatives of their employer, their country or any other entity. They are required to be independent, impartial, and objective, and to behave throughout the process in a professional manner. The experts sign an expert contract, including a declaration of confidentiality and absence of conflict of interest, before beginning their work.

All experts must declare beforehand any known conflicts of interest and must immediately inform the TrustChain Consortium if they detect a conflict of interest during the evaluation. The expert contract also requires experts to maintain strict confidentiality with respect to the whole evaluation process. They must follow all instructions given by the TrustChain Consortium to ensure this. Under no circumstance may an expert attempt to contact an applicant on his/her own account, during the evaluation process. Confidentiality rules must be always adhered to before, during, and after the evaluation.

Each proposal is evaluated by a set of 2 experts (one from the TrustChain Consortium and one independent) according to the following criteria:



1-Excellence and innovation (40% weighting)

- Clarity, pertinence, soundness of the proposed solution in the TRUSTCHAIN context and credibility of the proposed methodology including the User Centric Approach
- Extend that the proposed work is beyond the state of the art, and demonstrates innovation potential in relation to TRUSTCHAIN objective (e.g. ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts and approaches, new products, services or business and organisational models)
- Evaluate the degree to which the human centric methodology is clearly described and sound.
- Evaluate the appropriateness and soundness of the technical approach.


2-Expected impact and value for money (30% weighting)

- Contribution to TRUSTCHAIN overall goal to create a portfolio of Next Generation Internet protocols and an ecosystem of decentralised identity management software solutions that is transparent to the user, interoperable, privacy aware and regulatory compliant.
- Impact of the innovation on the needs of European and global markets is clearly provided and relevant KPIs are available.
- Quality of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results (including management of IPR), and to manage research/sensitive data where relevant in the context of TRUSTCHAIN.

3-Project Implementation (30% weighting)

- Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, including extend to which the resources assigned to the work are in line with its objective and deliverables and milestones.
- Required mandatory deliverables are provided.
- Quality and effectiveness of the management procedures including risks and mitigation management.
- Integration of the solution to the overall TRUSTCHAIN ecosystem.
- Team is properly established and includes the key expertise to achieve the objectives.

Experts will score each award criterion on a scale from 0 to 5 (half point scores may be given):



0=Proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.

1=Poor, criterion are inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses

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

3=Good, proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings is present.

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

5=Excellent, the proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

For each criterion, the minimum threshold is 3 out of 5 points. The default overall threshold, applying to the sum of the three criteria scores with the corresponding weight each, is 10.

Each expert prepares an individual evaluation report.

Following the individual evaluations by the two experts, a consensus meeting, typically mediated by the evaluation tool is organised between the two experts to achieve a consensus between them on the quality of the proposal based on the two evaluation reports. Comments and scores are validated by the two experts in a consolidated evaluation report.

When necessary, an additional review of projects for which there was a lack of consensus in terms of scoring by the two experts or for which additional clarifications are required is undertaken by the TrustChain Call Referent (member of the TrustChain Consortium). In this case, an additional independent evaluator is appointed to review the proposal. The final score is obtained based on the consensus of the 3 evaluators, two internal and one external to the consortium.

The TrustChain Consortium then formally approves the ranking list.

The admission to the online interview for applications follows this rule: **the 20 highest-ranked proposals are admitted to the online interview**. The TrustChain Consortium may decide to invite more proposals to be part of the online interview stage in case for example of *ex-aequo*.

In any case, all proposals admitted to the online interview must reach all score thresholds.

Regarding the communication of the results, each applicant will receive via e-mail a letter informing them of the decision, which can be either a rejection decision supported by an Evaluation Summary Report or an invitation to the online interview session.

4.1.3 Online interview and final selection

According to the rules, the top projects at the end of the proposal evaluation stage will be invited to the final selection stage. The applicants invited to the online interview will receive via e-mail, an invitation letter the online interview as well as relevant guidelines. **It is worth mentioning here that an invitation to the interview is not a formal invitation for funding.** The interview aims to better understand the project concept, scope, and centrality to the TrustChain vision, the team skills and competencies, capacity, and willingness to exploit the results under a commonly agreed plan with the rest of the TrustChain ecosystem and TrustChain partners. Most importantly, the online interview aims to clarify still unclear aspects of the proposal which have been identified during the proposal evaluation. The proposal evaluation report is not circulated to the applicants before the interview but forms the basis for the interaction with them.

In practice, the interview will be carried out by the evaluation board composed of the TrustChain core partners and the TrustChain advisory board members. It will be recorded to assure maximum transparency. It is based on 10 minutes pitch presentation and 20 minutes of Q&As to clarify some aspects regarding the quality of the proposal and its relevance for TrustChain, as well as to reach a final agreement about scores and the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR). The comments on the ESR are taken into consideration for the preparation of relevant questions during the online interview and they are not communicated beforehand to the applicants.

The ESR will be structured according to the 3 criteria mentioned in the previous section (i.e., excellence and innovation, expected impact and value for money, project implementation) and will consolidate the comment of the proposal evaluation and the clarifications and overall impression obtained during the online interview. Based on the final consolidate score, the short list of winners will be produced and only at this stage the final ESR will be communicated to the applicants.

Remaining proposals will be maintained on a reserve list and potentially be later admitted in case of withdrawal or failure of one of the projects initially admitted to successfully complete any phase of the contract signing process.

The list of selected projects is then submitted to the European Commission for final screening and validation.

4.1.4 Scientific misconduct and research Integrity

Issues of scientific misconduct and research integrity are taken very seriously. In line with the Horizon Europe Rules for Participation, appropriate action such as disqualification of the application, termination of the Grant Agreement Preparation phase or, if the Grant Agreement has been signed, the implementation of liquidated damages and financial penalties, suspension of payments, recoveries and termination of the Grant Agreement, will be taken against any applicants/beneficiaries found to have misrepresented, fabricated or plagiarised any part of their proposal.

4.2 THE AGREEMENT PROCESS

The objective of the agreement process is to fulfil the legal requirements between the TrustChain consortium and each selected project of the call. It covers essentially the status information of the beneficiaries. The legal requirements for legal entities and natural persons are provided in the table hereafter.

For legal entities	For teams of natural persons
<p>A legal existence: Company Register, Official Journal and so forth, showing the name of the organization, the legal address and registration number and, if applicable, a copy of a document proving Intra EU VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent) Specifically for SMEs: 1. A proof of the SME condition is required: - If the applicant has been fully validated as an SME on the Beneficiary Register of the HE Participant Portal, the PIC number must be provided. - If the applicant has not been fully validated as an SME on the HE Participant Portal, the following documents will be required to prove the status as an SME: 2. 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 organizations is required. 3. Status Information Form. It includes the headcount (AWU), balance, profit & loss accounts of the latest closed financial year and the relation, upstream and downstream, of any linked or partner company. 4. 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.</p>	<p>A copy of the ID-card or passport of participant(s) in the project team will be required.</p> <p>A proof for each participant in the project that (s)he is legally established and working in an eligible country (see section 3.2).</p>
<p>Bank account information: The account where the funds will be transferred will be indicated via a financial information form signed by the entity, individuals, and the bank owners. The holder of the account will be the legal entity and/or all the individuals or the coordinator of the group on its own (consortium of legal entities or consortium of legal entities and natural persons) if allowed by the other team members.</p>	
<p>Sub-grantee funding agreement: Signed between the TrustChain Consortium (represented by its coordinator European Dynamics), and the beneficiary/ies. Have a careful look at the document in Annex B.</p>	

This information will be requested by the TrustChain consortium according to specific deadlines. Failure to meet the deadlines requested will directly end the agreement process. These deadlines will be announced in the decision letter sent to successful applicants.

4.3 MONITORING PROCESS ALL ALONG THE SUB-PROJECTS DURATION

For the monitoring of the progress and proper evolution of the selected projects, selected Third Parties will have to attend several mandatory internal events organised with the TrustChain Consortium. Indicatively, they are the following:

- Kick-off event devoted to knowing the different selected Third Parties and their foreseen contribution to TrustChain,
- Meeting for setting-up clear KPIs that will be linked to the funding of the selected Third Parties,
- Midterm event devoted to following-up the progress of the Third Parties according to the defined KPIs, with a pitch contest where the Third Parties will present their project outcomes and in particular their prototype and their deployment scenarios,
- Final event with a pitch contest where the Third Parties will present their solutions and in particular their modularised software components ready for distribution and a demo of their solution.

4.4 FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Open Call #4 budget totals 1.989.000,00 € to support up to 17 projects.

4.4.1 Indicative distribution of the funds

Selected third party innovators will become part of the TrustChain programme and will go through an exhaustive sequential process which will last 9 months. The maximum amount of the fund will vary depending on the type of team (see sub-chapter 3.1) as indicated in the table below and providing that all the phases have been completed.

Type of team	Maximum funding
Team of natural persons	97K € + 2K €
Legal entity or consortium of legal entities or combination of legal entities and natural persons	115K € + 2K €

Payments will be done in 4 instalments based on concrete results (a prefinancing, two interim payments and a final payment). A detailed evaluation process will be presented in the TrustChain Open Call #4 guide for implementation for the related periods. **The 2,000.00 € extra funding will be provided in case of the project outcome results in a peer reviewed journal publication with a minimum impact factor of 2.5.**

- **Beginning of the implementation and pre-financing:**

During the first weeks of the project implementation, each team will define with their coaches a set of clear and objective KPIs to be achieved and linked with the funding. These KPIs are different for each team and are related to the solution to be implemented. They will help measure the project progress, but also the commitment and involvement of the third-party innovator (i.e., their consistency in attending periodic call meetings with the coaches, meeting the deadlines for reporting, among other criteria). After the definition of the KPIs, **a pre-financing of 30% of the sub-grant amount will be released.**

- **First midterm review and second instalment:**

At first midterm of the project implementation, the coaches will assess the KPI's percentage of execution of the project based on the evaluation of the deliverable D2. A 100% completion of the KPIs for the related period will unlock the total of the 2nd payment which is **20% of the total sub-grant amount.** A lower completion of the tasks will launch the proportional payment. If the KPIs for the related period are met by less than 50%, the payment will be retained until the KPIs for the period are assessed as completely reached. If less than 25%, the third-party innovators will be automatically disqualified from the process.

- **Second midterm review and third payment:**

At the second midterm of the project implementation, the coaches will assess the KPI's percentage of execution of the project based on the evaluation of the deliverable D3. A 100% completion of the KPIs for the related period will unlock the total of the 2nd payment which is **30% of the total sub-grant amount.** A lower completion of the tasks will launch the proportional payment. If the KPIs for the related period are met by less than 50%, the payment will be retained until the KPIs for the period are assessed as completely reached. If less than 25%, the third-party innovators will be automatically disqualified from the process.

- **Final review and final payment:**

At the end of the project implementation, third parties will be paid according to their overall completion of KPIs materialised by the deliverable D4. A final event will be used to evaluate third parties on a face-to-face pitch contest. The third parties will present their implemented solution, and their business plan in the context of TrustChain. A panel of evaluators consisting of the TrustChain Consortium and Advisory Board members, will assess the third-party innovators to release the final payment (**remaining 20% of the sub-grant amount**). In the case of an underperformance below 25%, the team will be disqualified, and no further payment will be released.

4.4.2 Summary of the funding per type of beneficiary

	Project			
	Pre- financing 30% of the total funding	Interim Payment 20% of the total funding	Pre- financing 30% of the total funding	Final Payment 20 % of the total funding
Indicative dates	M2	M4	M7	Project end
Team of Natural persons	29 100 €	19 400 €	29 100 €	19 400 €
Legal Entity(ies) or combination of legal entities or combination of legal entity (ies) and individual(s)	34 500 €	23 000 €	34 500 €	23 000 €

These numbers are indicative, detailed payment schedule and payment conditions will be settled in the Sub-grant Agreement (Annex B) at the time of the signature.

4.4.3 Origin of the Funds and specific Provision regarding multiple beneficiaries

Any selected proposer will sign a dedicated Sub-Grant Agreement (Annex B) with the TrustChain project coordinator (on behalf of TrustChain Consortium).

Specific provision regarding contracting in case of multiple beneficiaries:

In the case of projects with multiple beneficiaries (Team of natural persons, combination of legal entities, combination of legal entities and individual(s)), a Team/Consortium Agreement that designates among other the Coordinator/Authorized representative of the Team/Consortium must be adopted and signed by all the beneficiaries prior to the signature of the TrustChain Sub-grant Agreement.

The Coordinator/Authorized representative of the Team/Consortium signs the TrustChain Sub-grant Agreement on behalf of the multiple beneficiaries.

The Coordinator/Authorized representative receives the funding and must distribute the payments between the beneficiaries according to the conditions set in the Team/Consortium Agreement.

The funds attached to the Sub-Grantee Funding Agreement come directly from the funds of the European Project TrustChain, and the TrustChain consortium is managing the funds according to the Grant Agreement Number 101093274 signed with the European Commission.

As will be indicated in the Sub-Grant Agreement, the relation between the sub-grantees and the European Commission through the TrustChain project carries a set of obligations to the sub-grantees with the European Commission. It is the task of the sub-grantees to accomplish these obligations, and of the TrustChain consortium partners to inform about them.

5 PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF THE PROPOSALS

The submission will be done through the F6S platform (<https://www.f6s.com>) which is directly linked with the TrustChain Programme. The applicants are required to register a profile at F6S to be able to submit a proposal.

The documents that will be submitted are:

- **Application form (Annex C):** administrative questions to be completed directly in the F6S platform. In addition, some general questions for statistical purposes and tick boxes to be clicked by the third parties confirming they have read the conditions and agree with the conditions defined in this document. In addition, an Annex E will be uploaded in case that more than 3 applicants participate as individuals (natural persons) or/and more than 3 applicants participate as organisations (Legal entities) filled with the information about the applicant(s) that do not fit in the application form.
- **Proposal description (Annex D):** document in PDF format containing the description of the project. It will include three sections:
 - (1) Project Summary,
 - (2) Organisation background,
 - (3) Detailed proposal description.

The project proposals must strictly adhere to the template provided by the TrustChain consortium via the F6S platform, which defines sections and the overall length.

Participants are requested to carefully read and follow the instructions in the form. Evaluators will be instructed not to consider extra material in the evaluation.

Additional material, which has not been specifically requested in the online application form, will not be considered for the evaluation of the proposals. Data not included in the proposal will not be considered.

It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the proposal. Failure of the proposal to arrive in time for any reason, including communication delays, automatically leads to rejection of the submission. The time of receipt of the message as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

TrustChain offers a dedicated support channel available for proposers at trustchain@ngi.eu for requests or inquiries about the submission system or the call itself. Those received after the closure time of the call will neither be considered nor answered.

6 APPLICANTS COMMUNICATION FLOW

6.1 GENERAL COMMUNICATION PROCEDURE

Applicants will receive communications after each step of the evaluation process indicating whether they passed or not. A communication will also be sent to applicants rejected, including the reasons for the exclusion.

6.2 APPEAL PROCEDURE

If, at any stage of the evaluation process, the applicant considers that a mistake has been made or that the evaluators have acted unfairly or have failed to comply with the rules of this TrustChain Open Call, and that her/his interests have been prejudiced as a result, the following appeal procedures are available.

A complaint should be drawn up in English and submitted by email to trustchain@ngi.eu.

Any complaint made should include:

- Contact details.
- The subject of the complaint.
- Information and evidence regarding the alleged breach.

Anonymous complaints or those not providing the aforementioned information will not be considered.

Complaints should also be made within **five** (calendar) days since the announcement of the evaluation results to applicants.

As a general rule, the TrustChain Team will investigate the complaints with a view to arriving at a decision to issue a formal notice or to close the case within no more than twenty days from the date of reception of the complaint, provided that all the required information has been submitted by the complainant. Whenever this time limit is exceeded, the TrustChain Consortium will inform the complainant by email of the reasons for the unforeseen delay and the subsequent steps.

7 SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED BY TRUSTCHAIN TO THIRD PARTIES

Selected participants will receive support with the following services:

- **Access to Infrastructure:**

Access to the Alastria blockchain infrastructure (two different networks, T Network

based on GoQuorum and B Network based on Hyperledger Besu), compliant with Ethereum, for demonstration purposes, will be provided to the Applicants that request to use it for testing their proposed solution. This will be made available by Alastria through TrustChain, at no cost for the third-party innovators selected, in a BaaS model without requiring that the Applicants install their own blockchain node.

- **Use of token:**

The TrustChain consortium understands that the ultimate value of a new and innovative application should be shown in business context, for example, by demonstrating that the users (physical persons or companies) are willing to pay for using the service. In this context, the TrustChain core consortium partners are willing to consider the possibility of issuing a crypto-token for the purpose of demonstration of the applications' business value, should such an interest be expressed by the applicants.

- **Business support services:**

To support the third-party innovators to exploit their use cases and successfully reach the market, different training events and sessions with mentors will be organised. Depending on the team profile, aspects such as Value Proposition, pitching or IPR (among others) will be addressed.

- **Communication support services:**

Major visibility, promotion and networking opportunities are offered as part of the TrustChain project and the Next Generation Internet initiative. Selected third party innovators will:

- have access to communication tool kits and co-branding materials,
- be showcased in the TrustChain project website,
- be interviewed and promoted on relevant media channels,
- be invited to participate in top events, and
- connect with a vibrant ecosystem of innovators, investors, industry players and public authorities.

8 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPR)

The ownership of IPR created by the beneficiaries, via the TrustChain funding, will remain with them. Results are owned by the Party that generates them.

The Sub-Grant Agreement (Annex B) will introduce provisions concerning joint ownership of the results of the sub-granted projects.

9 COMMUNICATION OBLIGATIONS

Any communication or publication of the beneficiaries shall clearly indicate that the project has received funding from the European Union via the TrustChain project, therefore displaying the EU and project logo on all printed and digital material, including websites and press releases. Moreover, beneficiaries must agree that certain information regarding the projects selected for funding can be used by the TrustChain consortium for communication purposes.

10 SUPPORT FOR THE APPLICANTS

For more information about the TrustChain's Open Calls, please check the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section included at <https://trustchain.ngi.eu/fag/>.

For further information on the Open Call #4, in case of any doubt regarding the eligibility rules, the information that is to be provided in the Application Form, or if you encountered technical issues or problems with the Application Form, please contact TrustChain Technical Helpdesk email: trustchain@ngi.eu

11 INDICATIVE TIMELINES

Submission to the TrustChain Open Call #4 will open on 15 May 2024 (13:00 CEST) and close on 17 July 2024 (17:00 CEST). The table below presents the indicative dates during which each phase of TrustChain Open Call #4 will take place.

Description	Indicative dates*
Call Announcement	15 May 2024 at 13:00 CEST
Call closure and submission deadline	17 July 2024 at 17:00 CEST
Evaluation Period	Up to three months after the call closure
Signature of Sub-grant Agreement	Up to one month after the announcement of the final list of selected projects
Projects duration	9 months

***NOTE:** Dates for the different phases are indicative and may be subject to change if any modifications in the project's schedule occur.

ANNEXES

Other important documents can be consulted at <https://trustchain.ngi.eu/apply>

Annex B – Model Sub-grant Agreement Template (read only)

Annex C - Administrative Form (read only)

Annex D - Proposal Description Template (read only)

Annex E – Additional Applicant(s) Template (read only)

Note: Word templates (Annex D and Annex E) are available at F6S Submission System.