



Guidelines for publication of MAIA-TAQA Innovation Vouchers Call

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Call for innovation vouchers

30/12/2022



These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the actions under this call, in conformity with the ENI CBC MED Programme rules, which are applicable to the present call (available at <http://www.enicbcmed.eu/home>).

1. Background

Although participating regions of the MAIA-TAQA project are heterogeneous in terms of innovation, they do share a common challenge: to develop and to define in details a group of new services, with strong innovative character, in the field of sustainability (energy, water, resources) for the SMEs from the MED countries. For this reason, MAIA-TAQA will design, launch and test different innovation services in the MAIA-TAQA pilot regions ([within the eligible areas for the ENI CBC MED Programme](#) – see point 4.1. “Eligibility of applicants” for further information), that will further be capitalized under innovation one-stop-shops (IOSS), designed and implemented as stable initiatives to endure beyond the project in those countries.

Among these services, an innovation voucher system will be tested, under the form of incentives (subcontracts), that will support the purchase of innovation services by local SMEs in each country, to introduce innovation in the field of resource efficiency. The selected SME won't receive direct money, but an in-kind contribution from the MAIA-TAQA project in the form of personalized innovation and knowledge services.

With a total amount of 180.000 € available (60.000 € per each territory), and a threshold for the service of 20.000 €, it is estimated to cover the innovation needs of a minimum of 9 SMEs in the 3 MED countries, through MAIA-TAQA partners innovation service by subcontracts.

2. Objectives of the call

The **objective** of this call is to identify and select at least 9 SMEs (3 per participating country, beneficiaries' description in point 4.1. “Eligibility of applicants”) with interest in receiving support from innovation providers (i.e. universities, research groups, other SMEs or large companies, etc.) in the introduction of services related to the resource efficiency (ie. PVs, energy storage, solar thermal technologies, water sanitation, wastewater, etc).

According to the steps and methods described in article 3. “MAIA-TAQA project pipeline: selection of needs, tendering and funding”, the selected SMEs will submit a full description of their innovation needs, the services they'd be interested.

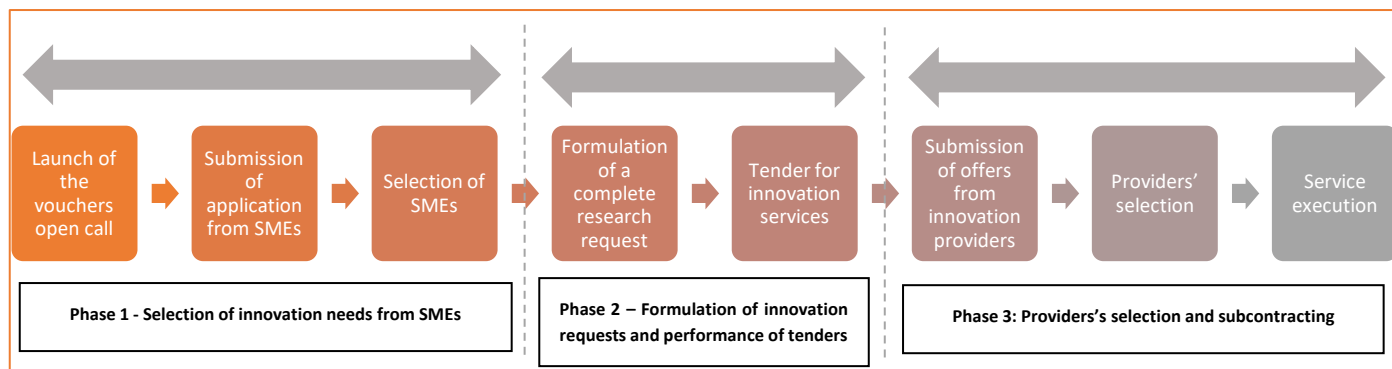
This information will be used, once the call is closed and solved, to develop the formulation of completed research challenges and commissions to knowledge providers addressing the demands of the SMEs selected, through specific tenders launched by the MAIA-TAQA local partners and designed in cooperation with the SMEs selected.

The participation of the knowledge provider will be under a direct contract with the project partners. The selected SME won't receive direct money, but a service package from the MAIA-TAQA project in the form of personalized innovation and knowledge services.

This call is in line with the objectives of the project, as the capacity of the SMEs to identify the innovation needs within the MED countries, reducing technical, business and commercial barriers.

This call is, therefore, the launch of a structured process which guarantees the following steps:

1. Launch of the vouchers open call
2. Submission of proposals from the SMEs
3. Selection of SMEs (min 3 per pilot country)
4. Formulation of a complete innovation request to innovation providers by the MAIA-TAQA regional partners in collaboration with each SME and according to the needs included in the call application request.
5. Preparation of the tender for innovation services by the MAIA-TAQA regional partners in collaboration with each SME
6. Submission of offers from the service providers (i.e. research entities, universities, private companies, etc.)
7. Providers' selection, subcontracting and contract signature among the MAIA-TAQA regional partners and the providers selected.



The type of services covered through the MAIA-TAQA voucher call are:

1. **Technical services:**
 - a. Technology watch
 - b. Innovation Reports and Technology Scouting
 - c. Renting of testing facilities
 - d. Technical support
 - e. Support for university-business technology transfer and intellectual property services
 - f. Analysis of the most relevant scientific production and capabilities of university teams
 - g. Efficient research mapping

- h. Technology missions with international R&D&i centers
- 2. Business consultancy:**
 - a. Establishment of the company
 - b. Specialized advice (legal, sales, IP, innovation, accreditation, etc.):
 - c. Support of internationalisation of R&D&i initiatives
 - d. Financing and funding search
- 3. Technical and business training and capacity building:**
 - a. Innovation courses
 - b. Online or face-to-face promotion events
 - c. Debate tables/ Innovation forums / Sectorial committees
- 4. Funding calls management**
 - a. Technical justification and monitoring
 - b. Financial justification and monitoring
 - c. Legal aspects (grant agreements, contract signature, etc).

3. MAIA-TAQA project pipeline: selection of needs, tendering and funding

The path offered by MAIA-TAQA, and starting from this innovation vouchers call includes the following phases:

Phase 1 - Selection of innovation needs from SMEs

This phase includes the following steps:

- 1) Launching of this call,
- 2) Submission of SMEs' proposals according to the application form template annexed to the call text, and including the following main fields: beneficiary description, innovativeness of the initiative, business impact, regional impact, service description and relevance of the service for the SME,
- 3) Evaluation a selection of the ideas received in each MAIA-TAQA region by a local committee set out in the 3 participating countries, following the criteria described in this call text These 3 local committees will be composed by the project partners

The highest scored applications covering the agreed budget per country (60.000€), according to the selection criteria described in this call text , will be invited to participate in 2nd phase, devoted to the definition of the research request and tenders performance for innovation service providers described below.

The output of Phase 1 will be the short list of selected innovation needs from SMEs ideas to be solved by innovation suppliers.

Phase 2 – Formulation of innovation requests and performance of tenders

After the selection of the SMEs needs, the MAIA-TAQA partners will start a tender design process with each selected SME. This will be done based on a negotiation phase among each selected SME

and the local partners, based on the description of the service included in the application, with the advice of the other consortium partners.

The output of Phase 2 will be the elaboration of one unique tender by the MAIA-TAQA partners and the selected SMEs addressing latest's innovation needs in each country, including one lot/bid per SME and service selected (according to the final number of applications approved in Phase 1).

Phase 3: Providers's selection and subcontracting

In this phase, the tenders performed during Phase 2 will be launched in order to receive the innovation providers offers. These could come from different type of entities (i.e. other SMEs, university, reasearch entities, etc.) without geographical restrictions.

The execution of the service must be performed by the 31/06/2023, considering a maximum duration of an estimated 4 months.

The selection of the tenderers will be done by a local commitee composed by the project partners.

The vouchers budget (180.000€ in total) will be managed through subcontracts to service providers and not as direct payment to SMEs.

The output of Phase 3 will be the technical and financial reports of the work developed by the tenderers as a result of the subcontracts.

4. Eligibility criteria for the Call for Innovative Ideas (Phase 0)

4.1. Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant(s))

The vouchers' call applicants must be legally established companies complying with the European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC2 and the SME user guide. As a summary, the criteria which define an SME are: (a) Independent (not linked or owned by another enterprise), in accordance to Recommendation 2003/361/EC; (b) Headcount in Annual Work Unit (AWU) less than 250; (c

Additionally, they need to fulfill the following requirements:

1. Not exceed, with the project sub-grant, the ceiling of 200.000 euros in state-aid over a period of three fiscal years, according to the de minimis rule set by the regulation (EC) 1407/2013;
2. Be established in one of the following regions:

Country	Eligible regions
Lebanon	The Whole country

3. Be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with the co-applicant(s), not acting as an intermediary;

The following additional applicants eligibility criteria per country will also apply:

Country	Additional applicants eligibility criteria
Lebanon	Minimum established 12 months before the submission with a valid commercial registration number.

4.1.1 Applicants: lead applicant and co-applicants

Applications can be submitted both by one single SME or by teams composed by SMEs acting as co-developers of the innovation solution.

In the case of a team, it will be represented by the “lead applicant”, and the rest of the members of the team will be considered as “co-applicants”. From now on, they will be referred to as “applicants”.

4.2. Eligibility of proposals

The submitted proposals will include a full description and justification of the innovation needs of the company, the services they’d be interested in receiving linked to them, as well as an estimated budget for it based on market scouting actions.

Additionally, the following requirements need to be met:

1. The service demand described within the proposal has to meet the type of services covered through the MAIA-TAQA voucher call (and described point 2. “Objectives of the call).
2. The estimated budget for the service could not be higher than 20.000€.
3. The estimated time for the service execution could not be higher than 4 months.
4. The action needs to be executed for SMEs within one of the following regions (although the service provider finally selected could be from outside these regions):

Country	Eligible regions
Lebanon	Whole country

5. The eligible sectors of application of proposals are

Country	Eligible sectors
Lebanon	Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency; Wastewater Treatment; use of Renewables in Wastewater Treatment and Reuse

4.3. Ethic clauses and Code of Conduct

a) Absence of conflict of interest

The applicant must not be affected by any conflict of interest and must have no equivalent relation in that respect with other applicants or parties involved in the actions. Any attempt by an applicant to obtain confidential information, enter into unlawful agreements with competitors or influence the evaluation committee or the project Lead Beneficiary / partner during the process of examining, clarifying, evaluating and comparing applications will lead to the rejection of its application and may result in administrative penalties.

All members of the selection committees will sign a non-disclosure agreement

b) Respect for human rights as well as environmental legislation and core labour standards

The applicant and its staff must comply with human rights. In particular and in accordance with the applicable act, applicants who have been awarded contracts must comply with the environmental legislation including multilateral environmental agreements, and with the core labour standards as applicable and as defined in the relevant International Labour Organisation conventions (such as the conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of forced and compulsory labour; abolition of child labour).

Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and sexual abuse:

The European Commission applies a policy of 'zero tolerance' in relation to all wrongful conduct which has an impact on the professional credibility of the applicant.

Physical abuse or punishment, or threats of physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, harassment, and verbal abuse, as well as other forms of intimidation shall be prohibited.

c) Anti-corruption and anti-bribery

The applicant shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations and codes relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The project Lead Beneficiary / partner and the Programme bodies reserve the right to suspend or cancel the sub-grant if corrupt practices of any kind are discovered at any stage of the award process or during the execution of the contract. For the purposes of this provision, 'corrupt practices' are the offer of a bribe, gift, gratuity or commission to any person as an inducement or reward for performing or refraining from any act relating to the award of a contract or execution of a contract already concluded.

d) Breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud

The project Lead Beneficiary / partner and the Programme bodies reserve the right to suspend or cancel the procedure, where the award procedure proves to have been subject to breach of obligations, irregularities,

or fraud. If breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud are discovered after the award of the contract, the project beneficiary may refrain from concluding the contract.

5. How to apply and the procedures to follow

5.1. Application formats

Applicants are invited to submit an application using the model of application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex 01. Application Form). Please note that only the application form which must be filled in will be evaluated. It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain all the relevant information concerning the action.

Applicants must apply in English. Hand-written applications will not be accepted.

Additionally, applicants will be requested to provide the following administrative documents:

Country	Administrative documents for the submission
Lebanon	Extract from the Commercial Registration

Any error related to the administrative information of the applicants will be communicated during a clarification period before the technical evaluation of applications, according to eligible criteria. The applicants will have a 7-day period to provide the information before the application is rejected.

5.2. Application process

Applications must be submitted through the following channels:

Country	Submission channels
Lebanon	Electronically

For electronic submissions (form or email):

- Applications must be submitted to the address below:

Country	Electronic submission channels
Lebanon	elcim@elcim-lb.org

- The email subject must include the reference of the call for innovation vouchers.

5.3. Deadline for submission of applications

The deadline for the submission of application will be:

Country	Deadline
Lebanon	30/12/2022

Any applications submitted after this deadline will be rejected.

5.4. Further information about application process

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 below, indicating clearly the reference of the call for business ideas:

Country	Email address
Lebanon	elcim@elcim-lb.org

The project partner who launches the call has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date. Replies will be given no later than 7 days before the deadline for the submission of applications.

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the project Lead Beneficiary / partner cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of applications and documents review.

All relevant questions and answers, as well as other important notices to applicants during the evaluation procedure, will be published in each MAIA-TAQA local partner in charge of the call as the need arises. It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned website regularly to be informed of the questions and answers published.

The launch of the tenders, as well as the publication of final results, will also be published on the website of MAIA-TAQA project (<https://www.enicbcmmed.eu/projects/maia-taqa>).

6. Evaluation and selection of applications

Applications will be examined and evaluated by local evaluation committees, created in each of the 3 pilot countries. All applications will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria.

If the examination of the application reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in Section 4, the application will be rejected on this sole basis.

(1) STEP 1: OPENING & ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKS. VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANTS

During the opening and administrative check, the following will be assessed:

- If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
- If the application satisfies all the criteria specified the eligibility of the action, otherwise the application will be rejected on that sole basis and the application will not be evaluated further.
- If the application satisfies all the criteria specified in the administrative checklist of the application form, otherwise the missing documents will be asked to be submitted within 7 days from its request

(2) STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE APPLICATION

The applications that pass the opening and administrative checks will be further technically evaluated on their quality. They will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria shown below, scoring each sub-criterion from 0 to 5. Each region will be able to modulate the importance of each criterion in accordance with the characteristics of the ecosystem, by using weights that will highlight the relevance of a certain evaluation criteria. Also, every region can decide to increase the weight of a specific sub-criterion, keeping them under a global approach to avoid significant disparities.

6.1. Evaluation criteria

Evaluation of the applicants
BENEFICIARY
<p>Company portfolio</p> <p><i>(The applicant includes a description of what the company does and its services/products portfolio)</i></p>
<p>Previous experience in the field (5 last years), including similar experiences on innovation if any</p> <p><i>(The applicant explains the company experience in the field of application of the call in its country up to the last 5 years, or less if the company has been established more recently)</i></p>
INNOVATIVENESS OF THE INITIATIVE
<p>Description of the innovation action and progress in relation to current state of knowledge, linked to the service demanded</p> <p><i>(The innovation action is well described and means a progress in the current state of knowledge, linked to the service demanded)</i></p>
<p>Innovative technology or knowledge applied</p> <p><i>(The technology and/or knowledge applied is well explained and aligned with the innovation action previously described)</i></p>
<p>Closeness to market (TRL)</p> <p><i>(The applicant defines and defend the TRL of the technology applied)</i></p>
<p>Potential of IP protection</p> <p><i>(The technology could be potentially protected intellectually, and some analyses have been done by the company in this sense)</i></p>
BUSINESS IMPACT
<p>Value proposition of the new services/products</p> <p><i>(The applicant describes clearly the value proposition of the new services/product to be obtained)</i></p>
<p>Customer identification and segmentation</p> <p><i>(The applicant includes an analysis and segmentation of the potential costumers of the service/product)</i></p>
<p>Market potential</p> <p><i>(The potential market for the service/product is well described at local, national and international level)</i></p>
<p>Industrial property strategy</p> <p><i>(The applicant has and explains its industrial property strategy for protecting the new service/product)</i></p>
<p>Identification of and differentiation from competitors</p>

<i>(The applicant includes a description of its market competitors in the new service/product and the main similarities and differences among its solution and theirs)</i>
REGIONAL IMPACT
In terms of job creation <i>(The applicant explains the plan for potential job creation linked to the new service/product launch)</i>
In terms of social inclusion <i>(The applicant explains the social impact and inclusion of people at risk of social exclusion linked to the launch of the new service/product, with special attention to gender issues and youth employment)</i>
In terms of environmental benefits and the sustainability for the company and the sector <i>(The applicant explains the environment and sustainability impact expected from the launch of the new service/product)</i>
MAIA-TAQA SERVICE DESCRIPTION
Description and justification of the service to be covered by the MAIA-TAQA voucher, including a maximum timeline expected for its provision. <i>(The service demanded for the MAIA-TAQA call is well described and the justification aligned with the information included in previous sections. The estimated duration is beyond the maximum of 4 months)</i>
Description and justification of the estimated budget of the service to be covered by the MAIA-TAQA voucher <i>(The applicant includes a justified estimation of the budget foreseen for the service provision covered by the MAIA-TAQA voucher with justification of it according to the market insights performed)</i>
RELEVANCE OF THE MAIA-TAQA SERVICE FOR THE SME
Impact of the service demanded for the MAIA-TAQA voucher in the evolution and success of the innovation activity <i>(The applicant explains how the service covered by the MAIA-TAQA voucher will be included and aligned with its general innovation strategy, and the impact of it in this framework)</i>
Impact of the service demanded for the MAIA-TAQA voucher at global business level <i>(The applicant explains how the service covered by the MAIA-TAQA voucher will be included and aligned with its general innovation strategy, and the impact of it in this framework)</i>

After the evaluation, a table will be drawn up listing the applications ranked according to their score. The highest scoring applications covering the allocated budget per country (60.000€) will be provisionally selected.

In addition, a reserve list will be drawn up following the same criteria. This list will be used if any of the applicants initially selected decline the invitation to participate in the Phases 2 and 3.

The evaluation committee reserve the right not to allocate all the positions if the proposals do not meet quality requirements.

7. Notification of the results of the evaluation

Applicants will be informed in writing of the evaluation committee's decision concerning their application and, if rejected, the reasons for the negative decision. An applicant believing that it has been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may lodge a complaint.

Country	Complaints processes
Lebanon	Submitting a written complaint by email within 7 days after evaluation committee's decision to elcim@elcim-lb.org

Those applicants that have been selected will be asked to sign an agreement, that will include the commitments acquired by the beneficiaries, to receive the innovation services.

In case any of the selected SMEs per country rejects the agreement, the next project in the reserve list will be notified.

As soon as the final initiatives per region have been confirmed, the final list will be published, and further instructions about next steps will be provided.

8. Working language

The English language will be the main working language during the application process as well as for communications and the implementation of innovative services in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon.

9. Visibility

Selected applicants must comply with the objectives and priorities and guarantee the visibility of the EU support (see the [Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU External Actions](#)).

10. Intellectual property

The property of the idea or project presented will remain in the power of the applicant, not assigning to the project partners any property rights by submitting it to the program.

11. Privacy and protection of personal data

MAIA-TAQA project partners and applicants undertake to maintain any information exchanged in strict confidentiality terms, as well as not to disclose to third parties (except those involved in the evaluation process) neither in whole nor in part, the information and documentation received from the other Party. Only the basic data of the submitted proposal (title, general description, image and name of the applicant) could be subject to disclosure for communication purposes. This confidentiality obligation will remain in effect even after the mentorship programme has ended.

Regulation applied to comply with all current national and community regulations on the protection of personal data:

Country	Regulations on the protection of personal data
Lebanon	National regulations on the protection of personal data

12. Acceptance of the bases and legislation

Participation in the call implies full acceptance of the call rules and the renouncement of any type of claim by the candidates. All the terms mentioned in these Terms and Conditions may not be reduced, but may be extended, or fixed those that are convenient for the MAIA-TAQA project development, publishing them on its website as far in advance as possible. If any of the terms of these Bases cannot be literally executed on their own terms, they will be adjusted respecting as much as possible the spirit of the current wording. These rules will be available at all times on the website <https://www.enicbmed.eu/projects/maia-taqa>.

The application of these bases will be governed by the national legislation and in the event of discrepancies in the interpretation or application of this document, the parties undertake to make their best efforts for an amicable solution thereof. In any case, the parties waive any jurisdiction that may correspond to them and expressly submit to the following courts and tribunals:

Country	City courts
Lebanon	City of Beirut

13. List of annexes

Annex 1: Application form