



**GOVERNMENT  
OF MALTA**



# Digitalise your SME

## Guidance Notes<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Clauses related to increased AI threshold applicable only to Call 2 - Digitalise your SME.

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## Definitions

**Aid intensity** means the gross aid amount expressed as a percentage of the eligible costs, before any deducted tax or other charge.

**Date of granting of the aid** means the date when the legal right to receive the aid is conferred on the beneficiary, being the date of the signing of the Grant Agreement.

The **Start Date** is identified in the Grant Agreement signed between the IB and the Beneficiary. Start of works on actions in relation to the activities for which assistance is being requested may only be initiated after the date of the granting of the aid.

**Project Completion** is defined as the date by when the Beneficiary ensures that:

- The Investment has been procured, delivered and is fully operational; and
- All expenditure has been incurred, invoiced and fully paid; and
- All relevant licences are in place
- Claim for Reimbursement submitted

**Any expenditure incurred, invoiced or paid after the project completion will be considered as ineligible.**

**Operation** means the project being proposed for part-financing through Call/s under this State aid scheme.

The **Authorised Representative** is the person identified in the application form who is entrusted to legally represent the undertaking and is thereby authorised to enter into agreements and sign contracts for and on behalf of the undertaking. In the case of Sole Traders/Self Employed person, this should invariably be the beneficiary.

The **Project Manager** is identified in the application form and is the person responsible for the implementation of the project on a day-to-day basis.

**Economic activity** - means an activity consisting of any one or more of the following:

- any trade, business, profession or vocation and the provision of any personal services;
- the exploitation of tangible or intangible property for the purpose of obtaining income there from on a continuing basis;
- the provision by a club, association or organisation of the facilities or advantages available to its members for a subscription or other consideration;
- the admission of persons to any premises for a consideration.

**Digitalisation Investment** means applications under the *Digitalise your SME* with the intent of financing hardware, software and digital solutions to improve their efficiency, productivity and customer experience.

**External source** means a source that is autonomous and unrelated to the Beneficiary Undertaking.

**Unrelated to the Beneficiary** - the fact that the buyer does not control the seller is not sufficient for fulfilling this criterion. The parties must be unrelated. For that, there

should be no influence (decisive or not) on the composition, voting or decisions of the organs of an Undertaking.

**Undertaking** means a **Micro, Small or Medium-Sized Enterprise** as defined in Annex I of Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty as amended.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02014R0651-20230701>

The main factors determining whether an enterprise is an SME are:

- **staff headcount** and
- either **turnover** or **balance sheet total**.

Company category	Staff headcount	Turnover	or	Balance sheet total
Medium-sized	< 250	≤ € 50 m		≤ € 43 m
Small	< 50	≤ € 10 m		≤ € 10 m
Micro	< 10	≤ € 2 m		≤ € 2 m

For more details:

[http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition/index_en.htm)

**Single Undertaking** includes, all enterprises having at least one of the following relationships with each other:

- one enterprise has a majority of the shareholders' or members' voting rights in another enterprise;
- one enterprise has the right to appoint or remove a majority of the members of the administrative, management or supervisory body of another enterprise;
- one enterprise has the right to exercise a dominant influence over another enterprise pursuant to a contract entered into with that enterprise or pursuant to a provision in its memorandum or articles of association;
- one enterprise, which is a shareholder in or member of another enterprise, controls alone, pursuant to an agreement with other shareholders in or members of that enterprise, a majority of shareholders' or members' voting rights in that enterprise.

Enterprises having any of the relationships referred to in points (a) to (d) through one or more other enterprises shall also be considered to be a single Undertaking.

**An enterprise** is considered to be any entity engaged in an economic activity, irrespective of its legal form. This includes, in particular, self-employed persons and

family businesses engaged in craft or other activities, and partnerships regularly engaged in an economic activity.

**An Autonomous Enterprise** is any enterprise which is not classified as a partner enterprise or as a linked enterprise as per provisions outlined in Annex I of Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty, as amended.

**Partner enterprises** are all enterprises which are not classified as linked enterprises and between which there is the following relationship: an enterprise (upstream enterprise) holds, either solely or jointly with one or more linked enterprises 25 % or more of the capital or voting rights of another enterprise (downstream enterprise).

However, an enterprise may be ranked as autonomous, and thus as not having any partner enterprises, even if this 25 % threshold is reached or exceeded by the following investors, provided that those investors are not linked, within the meaning of 'linked enterprise', either individually or jointly to the enterprise in question:

- a) public investment corporations, venture capital companies, individuals or groups of individuals with a regular venture capital investment activity who invest equity capital in unquoted businesses (business angels), provided the total investment of those business angels in the same enterprise is less than EUR 1 250 000;
- b) universities or non-profit research centres;
  - c) institutional investors, including regional development funds;
  - d) autonomous local authorities with an annual budget of less than EUR 10 million and less than 5 000 inhabitants.

**Linked enterprises** are enterprises which have any of the following relationships with each other:

- a) an enterprise has a majority of the shareholders' or members' voting rights in another enterprise;
- b) an enterprise has the right to appoint or remove a majority of the members of the administrative, management or supervisory body of another enterprise;
- c) an enterprise has the right to exercise a dominant influence over another enterprise pursuant to a contract entered into with that enterprise or to a provision in its memorandum or articles of association;
- d) an enterprise, which is a shareholder in or member of another enterprise, controls alone, pursuant to an agreement with other shareholders in or members of that enterprise, a majority of shareholders' or members' voting rights in that enterprise.

Enterprises having any of the relationships described in a) to d) above through one or more other enterprises, or any one of the investors mentioned under Partner Enterprise, are also considered to be linked.

Enterprises which have one or other of such relationships through a natural person or group of natural persons acting jointly are also considered linked enterprises if they engage in their activity or in part of their activity in the same relevant market or in adjacent markets.

An ‘**adjacent market**’ is considered to be the market for a product or service situated directly upstream or downstream of the relevant market.

**The same or a similar activity** means an activity in the same class (four-digit numerical code) of the NACE Rev 2 statistical classification of economic activities as laid down in Regulation (EC) No 1893/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 establishing the statistical classification of economic activities NACE Revision 2 and amending Council Regulation (EEC) No 3037/90 as amended by Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2023/137 of 10 October 2022 amending Regulation (EC) No 1893/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the statistical classification of economic activities NACE Revision 2, as well as certain EC Regulations on specific statistical domains<sup>3</sup>.

**Crafts** means an art, skill, or trade, practised by a person or persons in the manufacture of artefacts and other products and generally requiring in its manufacturing a greater input of human skill than of machinery.

**Assets** refer to **tangible assets** meaning assets consisting of equipment and **intangible assets** meaning assets that do not have a physical or financial embodiment such as patents, licences, know-how or other intellectual property.

**Marketing of agricultural products** means holding or display with a view to sale, offering for sale, delivery or any other manner of placing on the market, except the first sale by a primary producer to resellers or processors and any activity preparing a product for such first sale; a sale by a primary producer to final consumers shall be considered to be marketing if it takes place in separate premises reserved for that purpose.

**Primary agricultural production** means production of products of the soil and of stock farming, listed in Annex I to the Treaty, without performing any further operation changing the nature of such products.

**Processing of Agricultural products** means any operation on an agricultural product resulting in a product which is also an agricultural product, except on-farm activities necessary for preparing an animal or plant product for the first sale.

**Agricultural product** means the products listed in Annex I to the Treaty, with the exception of fishery and aquacultural products falling within the scope of Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02006R1893-20250101>

**Fishery and Aquaculture products** are defined as per provisions of Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 of the European Parliament and of the council.

**Start-up** means an Enterprise which, at the time of the granting of the aid is an unlisted micro or small enterprise up to five years following its registration, that fulfils the following cumulative conditions:

- a) it has not taken over the activity of another undertaking, unless the turnover of the overtaken activity accounts for less than 10% of the turnover of the eligible undertaking in the financial year preceding the take-over;
- b) it has not yet distributed profits;
- c) it has not acquired another undertaking or has not been formed through a merger, unless the turnover of the acquired undertaking accounts for less than 10% of the turnover of the eligible undertaking in the financial year preceding the acquisition or the turnover of the merged undertaking formed through a merger is less than 10% higher than the combined turnover that the merging undertakings had in the financial year preceding the merger.

For eligible undertakings that are not subject to registration, the five-year eligibility period shall start from either the moment when the undertaking starts its economic activity or the moment it becomes liable to tax with regard to its economic activity, whichever is earlier.

By way of derogation from the first sub-paragraph, point (c), undertakings formed through a merger between undertakings eligible for aid under this scheme shall also be considered eligible undertakings up to five years from the date of registration of the oldest of the merging undertakings.

**Establishment Date** shall be determined on the following parameters:

- a) For limited liability companies, the Establishment Date shall be the date of registration with the MBR as long as the Undertaking was not operative under a different form prior to registration with the MBR.
- b) In the case of self-employed, the start-up date shall be considered to be the date the person registered as a self-employed person with the JobsPlus;
- c) For registered partnerships and unregistered partnerships, the establishment date shall be considered to be the date an agreement is signed between the parties within the respective partnerships;
- d) In the case of co-operatives, the establishment date shall be considered as the date of the registration of the co-operative with the Co-operatives Board;

**Unlisted** means an undertaking which is not listed on the official list of a stock exchange, except for alternative trading platforms.

**Artificial intelligence** refers to systems that use technologies such as text mining, computer vision, speech recognition, natural language generation, machine learning, deep learning to gather, use and/or produce data, for example to make predictions, recommendations, or decisions, with varying levels of autonomy.

Artificial intelligence systems can be software-based, e.g.:

- systems that create content (generative AI);
- chatbots and business virtual assistants based on natural language processing;
- face recognition systems based on computer vision or speech recognition systems;
- data analysis based on machine learning;

or embedded in devices, e.g.:

- autonomous robots for warehouse automation or production assembly works;
- autonomous drones for production surveillance or parcel handling.

In terms of the contribution by the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA) in line with clause 1.7, apart from Artificial Intelligence which is defined above, the following are defined as follows:

**Big Data (Data analytics)** for the purpose of this scheme may include data analytics<sup>4</sup>. Data analytics means the use of technologies, techniques or software tools for analysing data to extract patterns, trends and insights to make conclusions, predictions and better decision-making with the aim of improving performance (e.g. increase production, reduce costs). Data may be extracted from own enterprise data source or from external sources (e.g. suppliers, customers, government).

**Cloud Computing** means a technology that enables on-demand access to computing resources, including storage, processing power, and applications, over the internet, allowing for scalable and flexible IT infrastructure without requiring on-premises hardware. Cloud computing, measured as the percentage of enterprises using at least one intermediate or sophisticated cloud computing services: finance or accounting software applications, enterprise resource planning (ERP) software applications, customer relationship management (CRM) software applications, security software applications, hosting the enterprise's database(s), and computing platform providing a hosted environment for application development, testing or deployment.

**Cyber Security** means the activities necessary to protect network and information systems, the users of such systems, and other persons affected by cyber threats.

**Internet of Things (IOT)** means a network of interconnected physical devices that communicate and exchange data through the internet, enabling automation,

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<sup>4</sup> Big Data was changed by ESTAT, in agreement with all the EU National Statistical Institutes, into Data Analytics and covers a broader range of technologies including Big Data.

monitoring, and remote control across various applications, including smart homes, industrial systems, and healthcare.

**Quantum Technology** means an emerging field of technology that leverages the principles of quantum mechanics to develop advanced computing, cryptography, and communication systems, offering enhanced computational power and security beyond classical systems.

## 1 Introduction

This document provides information on the *Digitalise your SME* and should be read in conjunction with the following document:

- User Guide to the Application Form

These Guidance Notes are binding and failure to comply with the provisions of these documents may result in financial corrections and recovery of funds.

These Guidance Notes may be reviewed, updated, and amended from time to time by the IB throughout the lifetime of the scheme.

### 1.1 Management structure

The Measures and Support Division within the Ministry responsible for the management of Union Funds has been designated by the Managing Authority (MA) as an Intermediate Body (IB) responsible for administering European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Grant Schemes through the implementation of Support Measures under the 2021-2027 programming period.

### 1.2 Scope

Enterprises in Europe no longer compete just with their neighbours or even other firms in their country but with all competitors on the global marketplace. It is necessary to always be on top of the latest technologies to provide the best products and to deliver the most rewarding services. Digitalisation investment is needed to achieve such goal. The capability of an enterprise to digitalise by addressing new digital capabilities and digitalised processes is crucial for survival and future business growth. Digitalization opens up new economic opportunities. In addition, digital technologies enable new business models, intelligent work and production processes, more effective customer acquisition and better networking.

This incentive seeks to assist SMEs through non-repayable Grants to part-finance investment to digitalise their operations, and hence improve their resilience, efficiency, productivity and customer experience by addressing new digital capabilities and digitalised processes such as product and process design and engineering, end-to-end procurement, supply chain/distribution and after sales.

### 1.3 Investment Priorities and Specific Objectives

This Grant Scheme falls under Policy Objective 1 '*A more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity*' of SFC2021 Programme 2021- 2027 '*Towards a smarter, well connected and resilient economy, a greener environment and an integrated society*', and addresses the following Policy Objective and Specific Objective:

PO1: A more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity

RSO1.2. Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities (ERDF)

#### 1.4 Duration

The *Digitalise your SME* will remain effective until 31 December 2026, subject to availability of funds.

#### 1.5 Budget

The initial allocated budget for this scheme is €15,000,000. This includes a contribution by the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA) in line with clause 1.7.

#### 1.6 Open (rolling) Call

The scheme shall be managed on a demand driven basis. The IB shall issue a public open call (rolling-call) with periodical cut-off dates for interested eligible Undertakings to submit their applications. Following each cut-off date, applications will be assessed and evaluated and eligible applications scoring at least 50% of the selection criteria shall be awarded subject to budget availability.

#### 1.7 Maximum Grant and Aid intensity

The minimum grant value under this scheme is set at €25,000, while the maximum grant value for eligible actions is €120,000<sup>5</sup>. An additional 7% flat rate is applied to the grant value to finance indirect costs related to the investment. For example, if the grant value amounts to €120,000, a 7% flat rate will be applied, resulting in a total maximum grant to €128,400.

AI-related projects shall have their maximum grant threshold increased by up to €100,000<sup>6</sup>, applicable exclusively for Artificial Intelligence cost items. Up to 25% of this additional threshold may be allocated to staff costs. An additional 7% flat rate shall be applied on this additional threshold to finance indirect costs related to the AI investment. At the maximum additional threshold of €100,000, the application of the 7% flat rate results in a total increased maximum grant threshold to €107,000.

Applications are eligible for part-financing eligible costs up to **50% for investments in Malta** and **60% for investments in Gozo**. The Grant amount that a single Undertaking may receive shall depend on the application for and receipt of *de minimis* aid by the single undertaking over any period of three years. The total amount of *de minimis* aid granted to a single undertaking under this scheme and any other *de minimis* scheme, including that received from any entity other than the IB shall not exceed the amount of €300,000 over any period of three years. Any *de minimis* aid received in excess of the established threshold will have to be recovered, with interest, from the undertaking receiving the aid. A *de minimis* declaration form indicating any other *de minimis* aid received and/or applied for over any period of 3 years to which the *de minimis* Regulation applies, must be filled in and submitted by all applicants together with the application form.

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<sup>5</sup> For clarification, the maximum grant value of €128,400 applies to the total of all ongoing grants awarded to the applicant and its linked enterprises across the various investment schemes. The increased AI threshold of up to €100,000 shall not be taken into consideration for this cumulative cap. Further details are provided in clauses 2.6 (xvii) and 2.6 (xviii).

<sup>6</sup> AI-related projects that do not exceed the standard maximum grant of €120,000 but include eligible staff costs may opt to fall under the additional AI threshold. In such cases, 25% of the grant amount (up to €25,000) may be allocated to staff costs, subject to the submission of an Ethical AI and Societal Well-Being assessment and a productivity gains forecast report.

Applications that include Cyber Security, Internet of Things (IOT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data analysis, Cloud Computing or Quantum Technology as defined in the definitions section, shall benefit from an additional 10% aid intensity applied for those specific items, in line with the targets set out in Malta's Digital Decade Strategic Roadmap 2023 - 2030. This additional budget is being financed by the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA).

For AI-related projects, the 10% top-up on the additional threshold shall be funded by MDIA and disbursed one year after project completion, subject to the submission of both a productivity gains report and an ethical AI and societal well-being report. This top-up will be provided subject to budget availability.

Applications that meet not more than 6 of the 12 digital intensity technologies and which will achieve at least 7 or more of the 12 digital intensity technologies following the completion of the project will have their aid intensity topped up by 5%. The comprehensive list of the digital intensity technologies can be found in Section 3.3(5).

## 1.8 Implementation

Actions financed under the *Digitalise your SME* are to be implemented within 24 months from the date of the Grant Agreement for fixed periods of either 6 months, 12 months, 18 months or 24 months depending on how long the applicant has applied for within the application (*between 0-c months; c-12 months; 12-18 months, 18-24 months*). Extensions beyond this timeframe may be considered upon the express request of the Beneficiary, when justified. Nonetheless, investments are to be concluded by 30 June 2029<sup>7</sup>.

## 1.G Regulatory Framework

The Programme for support from the European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund and Just Transition Fund.

<https://fondi.eu/programme/european-regional-development-fund-cohesion-fund-just-transition-fund/>

The Partnership Agreement of Malta.

<https://fondi.eu/programme/partnership-agreement/>

Aid may be awarded in accordance with the relevant terms and conditions of Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2831 of 13 December 2023 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to *de minimis* aid.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/2831>

Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund. This Regulation sets out the specific objectives and the scope of support from the European

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<sup>7</sup> This date may be extended subject to compliance with national targets.

Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with regard to the Investment for jobs and growth goal referred to in Article 5(2) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1058>

Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R1060>

## 2 Eligibility

### 2.1 Eligible Undertakings

**Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises** engaged in an eligible economic activity, irrespective of their legal form, referred to as the 'Undertaking' subject to the exclusions enlisted below.

Undertakings which are not vested with a legal personality acquired through the law applicable to their establishment, need to be registered under the Second Schedule of the Civil Code (CAP 16 of the Laws of Malta)<sup>8</sup>.

### 2.2 Eligible Actions

This Grant Scheme seeks to support digitalisation investment initiatives by Start-ups and SMEs, in several economic sectors, in their digitalisation endeavours and to intensify the digitalisation of operations. Digitalisation is crucial as it can help provide better services and products of higher quality, as well as improve the management of resources to increase efficiency and reach new markets.

The scheme shall support enterprises through investments in digital technologies and related processes in the enterprise in particular hardware, software and other digital solutions to improve their efficiency, productivity and customer experience.

The concrete advantages of going digital are many and can help enterprises in different areas of activity, for example:

- digitalising the management system of resources and staff can optimise the way activities and tasks are undertaken, smoothing the workflow and producing long-term benefits;
- using new machines based upon digital technologies can improve the production of goods, both increasing the quality of the finished product and speeding up the process;
- deliver services perfectly tailored to the requests of clients, as all information required can be more easily found and analysed through software and programs;
- reaching out to new potential new customers is much easier thanks to digital marketing and the use of online channels that can identify and communicate to the audience most in need of your business.

#### 2.2.1 Eligible Actions that qualify for the increased AI threshold

Eligible actions<sup>9</sup> that qualify for the increased AI threshold span from the acquisition, development, and customisation of AI tools and platforms to the supporting infrastructure and services needed to prepare these solutions for real-world use. This includes the integration of AI capabilities into existing business systems, the procurement of essential hardware or cloud resources, and the implementation of cybersecurity, assurance, and configuration activities. Together, these interventions

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<sup>8</sup> In the case of partnerships, excluding those registered with the Accountancy Board, registration with the Malta Business Register (MBR) is required.

<sup>9</sup> In-depth details on the eligible actions can be found on [Annex VII](#) to these Guidance Notes.

ensure that beneficiaries can adopt AI solutions that are technically sound, secure, and fully embedded within their operational environment.

- **AI Solution Development s Customisation**  
Eligible when centred on adapting and configuring existing AI technologies, not inventing new models or conducting any RCD
- **AI-Based Digital Tools s Platforms**  
Acquisition or activation of AI-powered systems to be deployed within the SME.
- **Custom Software Modules Integrated With AI**  
Custom development required to embed AI within enterprise systems<sup>10</sup>.
- **Hardware Required for AI Operations**  
Eligible only when essential for running or deploying the AI solution beyond the basic hardware that the end user would need to access the AI solution.
- **Cloud, Compute s Data Infrastructure**  
Infrastructure required for hosting, operating, or supporting the AI system.
- **Cybersecurity Measures Supporting the AI System**  
Security components required to ensure safe, secure and compliant operation of the AI solution.
- **Data Collection, Preparation s Deployment Support**  
Activities required to prepare the AI system for real-world use, without constituting RCD.
- **Integration with Enterprise Systems<sup>11</sup>**  
Activities required to ensure the AI solution is fully operational and embedded within the SME's existing environment.
- **Supplier Implementation s Configuration Services**  
External specialist services required for the deployment of the AI solution.
- **AI Assurance s Responsible Use Controls**  
Controls and mechanisms that ensure safe, compliant, and responsible operation of the AI system.

### 2.3 Eligible Expenditure

This Grant Scheme will support eligible enterprises to procure expenditure which is eligible under the general threshold as well as expenditure which is eligible under the increased AI-threshold.

**The aid value for the identified eligible expenditure shall be reimbursed through actual cost incurred, paid and capped at the value of the Grant Agreement or the invoice amount, whichever is the lowest, with the exception of Staff Costs (as identified in 2.3.2 (a) which shall be reimbursed through the application of Simple Cost Option.**

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<sup>10</sup> For the purposes of the scheme, enterprise systems refer to business systems used to support core operational processes, including but not limited to ERP, CRM, finance, HR, supply chain, or similar systems, regardless of their scale or complexity.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid ...

Any of the above expenditure is to be identified in the Application and Investment Proposal (*if applicable*) and are to be procured from external and unrelated sources to the applicant.

Moreover, any of the above must be related to the applicant's economic activity, must have a productive purpose not merely for embellishment and must have a lifetime of more than three years.

Expenditure shall only be considered eligible if it is approved in the Grant Agreement, incurred during the specified project period and, the Beneficiary achieves the set indicators as outlined in the Grant Agreement and in line with the scheme Guidance Notes.

### 2.3.1 Eligible Expenditure under general threshold

The following cost categories are eligible under the general threshold:

#### Digital Solutions<sup>12</sup> -

- Commercial Off-The-Shelf (COTS) and Custom Software
- Hardware (such as Laptops, Docking Station, Port Replicator, Monitors, Tablets)
- Analytical Tools (including necessary hardware and software)
- Cyber Security systems
- Cloud computing
- Internet of Things (IOT)
- Artificial intelligence (AI)
- Big Data analysis
- Cyber Security
- Quantum Technology
- Routers, switches and WIFI related equipment
- Other hardware, software or Digital Solutions (identified in the application and not already identified above, which the division may consider eligible under this scheme)
- Installation including any training costs on the use of the specific item acquired under points above and included in the purchase price of the item in question, and thus from the same provider.

In addition to the above, applicants are also entitled in their operations budget another simplified cost option<sup>13</sup>, being a flat rate on the eligible expenditure<sup>14</sup>, to reflect as follows:

- 7% flat rate to finance any indirect costs related to the investment<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For subscription-based software, the cost of a 2-year subscription will be considered as the eligible cost item.

<sup>13</sup> The maximum grant shall not exceed the maximum applicable aid intensity as identified in 1.7 of the scheme Guidance Notes

<sup>14</sup> As identified in 2.3.1 of these Guidance Notes.

<sup>15</sup> In line with Article 54 (a) of Reg. (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

The following non-exhaustive list of items, although potentially eligible under the scheme, do not qualify for the MDIA top-up:

- Tablets (Android, iOS, or other operating systems)
- Laptops of any kind
- Computer towers and small form factor PCs
- Monitors
- Projectors
- Printers, copiers, scanners, or any combination of such devices
- Bar code readers or scanners
- Networkable or non-networkable cash registers

### 2.3.2 Eligible Expenditure that qualify for the increased AI threshold

The following cost categories are eligible under the increased threshold:

- a) **Staff Costs** (*aligned with the eligible actions*)
- Eligible staff costs shall correspond to the hours worked directly on the development or implementation of the AI solution. Project management activities shall not be eligible under this cost category. Such costs shall be capped at a maximum of 25% of the additional threshold.
  - Eligible Staff costs shall be calculated on the basis of an hourly rate of €19.62<sup>16</sup>, multiplied by the number of hours identified in the scoping report. The roles of the staff concerned shall fall under the “Professionals” occupational category, in accordance with the International Standard Classification of Occupations.
  - Beneficiaries shall provide the names of the employees involved, together with documentation issued by the service provider confirming the total number of hours performed by such employees.
- b) **AI Solutions**
- Acquisition of AI solution/models  
*Eligible investments may include*
    - Custom-built AI solutions
    - Customised off-the-shelf (COTS) AI systems
    - Subscription-based AI platforms (for a period of up to 2 years)
    - Consumption or usage based models (for a period of up to 2 years)<sup>17</sup>
    - Integration services required to connect the AI solution with existing systems such as ERP, CRM, or other core platforms
  - Procurement of hardware and/or cloud solutions
    - Hardware or cloud services directly required for the implementation of the AI solution are eligible.
    - Cloud services may be supported for a period of up to 2 years.

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<sup>16</sup> This rate is based on the “Professionals” occupational category, in line with the International Standard Classification of Occupations as reflected in the NSO Labour Force Survey.

<sup>17</sup> Based on transparent cost estimates provided in the scoping exercise and reimbursed by extrapolating the lowest monthly consumption evidenced in the submitted invoices at claim for reimbursement over a 24-month period or the Grant Agreement value, whichever is the lowest. Open-ended or indeterminate consumption commitments cannot be supported, as grant amounts must be clearly established in advance in line with procurement, audit and financial control requirements.

- AI-Related Components and Supporting Measures  
*Costs directly linked to the development of the AI solution, including:*
  - Cybersecurity measures
  - AI assurance and responsible-use frameworks
  - User Acceptance Testing (UAT)
  - Deployment and configuration support
- External services required for the set-up of AI modules or cloud environments, where necessary for the solution's deployment. This may include support to applicants under the scope of the EU AI Act to enhance their capacity to comply with upcoming requirements. Such support shall be limited till the coming into force of the requirements associated with High Risk AI Systems.
- User training specifically related to the approved AI solution is eligible when delivered by the same supplier(s) providing the AI system or related components

In addition to the above, applicants are also entitled in their operations budget another simplified cost option<sup>18</sup>, being a flat rate on the eligible expenditure under AI Solutions<sup>19</sup>, to reflect as follows:

- 7% flat rate to finance any indirect costs related to the investment<sup>20</sup>.

## 2.4 Ineligible Expenditure

- a) Costs related to the repair and maintenance of the investment, including costs for maintenance agreements and also bundles for technical issues.
- b) Tax including Value Added Tax and other duties.
- c) Insurance costs.
- d) Training costs except for costs identified in section 2.3(b) above.
- e) Contingencies and/or losses made by the Applicant.
- f) Payment of dividends, royalty and interest changes.
- g) In kind contributions.
- h) Service charges arising on finance leases, hire purchase and credit arrangements.
- i) Used, re-furbished or re-manufactured Digital Solutions.
- j) Cost resulting from deferral of payments to creditors.
- k) Cost related to litigation including resulting claims for damages and fines.
- l) Statutory fines and penalties.
- m) Payments for gifts and donations.
- n) Entertainment (including catering, receptions, etc.)
- o) Depreciation.
- p) Foreign exchange costs and related losses.
- q) Bank charges.
- r) Commissions.
- s) Fees relating to design, marketing and any other consultancy work.

<sup>18</sup> The maximum grant shall not exceed the maximum applicable aid intensity as identified in 1.7 of the scheme Guidance Notes

<sup>19</sup> As identified in 2.3.2 (b) of these Guidance Notes.

<sup>20</sup> In line with Article 54 (a) of Reg. (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

- t) Mobile Phones.
- u) Network Cabling
- v) All MCE (supplies and works) related to the Building Envelope including but not limited to Electrical Installations; Sockets, Plugs, Switches.
- w) Projects that already exist within the framework of other funding programmes of the European Union.

## 2.5 Exclusions

- i. Undertakings subject to collective insolvency proceedings or fulfilling the criteria under their domestic law for being placed in collective insolvency proceedings at the request of their creditors.
- ii. Undertakings subject to an outstanding recovery order following a Commission decision declaring an aid granted by Malta illegal and incompatible with the internal market.
- iii. Undertakings that have not honoured their obligations further to a recovery order issued by MSD.
- iv. Exclusions as per provisions of Commission Regulation (EU) No 2023/2831 of 13 December 2023 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to *de minimis* aid, where applicable.
- v. Undertakings whose activities<sup>21</sup> include, directly or indirectly, the provision of any of the eligible expenditure, are excluded from applying for such expenditure.
- vi. Undertakings that have the internal capability<sup>22</sup> to develop or retail any of the eligible expenditure are excluded from applying for such expenditure.
- vii. Undertakings whose principal activities fall under Section A ‘Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing’ of the NACE Rev. 2.
- viii. Undertakings active in the sector of processing and marketing of agricultural products, in the following cases:
  - where the amount of the aid is fixed on the basis of the price or quantity of such products purchased from primary producers or put on the market by the undertakings concerned.
  - where the aid is conditional on being partly or entirely passed on to primary producers.
- ix. Undertakings whose principal activities include the manufacturing, processing and marketing of tobacco and tobacco products.
- x. Public entities: Ministries, Departments, Entities, Authorities, Public Commissions, Public Sector Foundations and similar organisations carrying out a public or regulatory function which does not involve the carrying out of an economic activity, whether or not such organisations are established by law. With the exception of commercial Undertakings carrying out an exclusively an economic activity in direct competition with third parties and in which Government has a controlling interest.
- xi. Gambling and Betting Activities.

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<sup>21</sup> The principal activities shall be determined according to the NACE code and/or MCA.

<sup>22</sup> Internal capability shall be determined according to the NACE code and/or MCA of related enterprises.

- xii. Investment to achieve the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from activities listed in Annex I to Directive 2003/87/EC.
- xiii. Actions resulting in training and mentoring activities.
- xiv. Actions resulting in investment in the decommissioning or the construction of nuclear power stations.
- xv. Actions resulting in investment in airport infrastructure unless related to environmental protection or accompanied by investment necessary to mitigate or reduce its negative environmental impact.
- xvi. Undertakings engaged in an illegal economic activity.
- xvii. Applicants whose Total Eligible Cost to Net Assets (total assets minus total liabilities) ratio is less than 2%.
- xviii. Applicants with negative net assets (total assets minus total liabilities), except for start-ups that are under 3 years, where the negative net assets do not exceed €120,000.

## 2.6 Additional Provisions

- i. The Grant amount is subject to the conditions outlined in these Guidance Notes and the determined thresholds. Moreover, for applications under *de minimis* this shall also depend on the application for and the receipt of *de minimis* aid by the single undertaking over any period of three years. In line with Commission Regulation (EU) No 2023/2831 of 13 December 2023 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to *de minimis* aid, a single Undertaking may not receive more than €300,000 in *de minimis* aid from any public funding (EU Funds and/or any other national funds) over a rolling period of three years.
- ii. For applications under *de minimis*, Undertakings are to submit an updated *de minimis* declaration on *de minimis* aid, received and/or applied for, in line with Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2831.
- iii. The applicant enterprise is in compliance with applicable EU and national legislation and administrative requirements, including fulfilment of fiscal obligations and social security contributions.
- iv. Any works on actions in relation to the activities for which assistance is being requested may only be initiated after the date of the granting of the aid.
- v. Applicants must submit an *Investment Proposal* document or 3 quotations for each sub-activity which shall include the technical specification. The presented *Investment Proposal* document or quotations shall be the basis on which the grant shall be calculated upon.
- vi. Applicants must submit an application for Investments located exclusively in either Malta or Gozo.
- vii. The investment must be maintained in the recipient areas by the Undertaking and remain operational for a period of at least three years following the final payment to the Beneficiary. This shall not prevent the replacement of equipment that has become outdated or broken within this period, provided that the economic activity is retained in the area concerned for the relevant minimum period.

- viii. Intangible assets are eligible for the calculation of investment costs if they fulfil the following conditions:
  - a. they must be used exclusively in the establishment receiving the aid;
  - b. they must be amortisable;
  - c. they must be purchased under market conditions from third parties unrelated to the buyer; and
  - d. they must be included in the assets of the Undertaking receiving the aid and must remain associated with the project for which the aid is granted for at least three years following the completion of the investment project.
- ix. All assets including 'Intangible assets' must be included in the Capital Assets Register.
- x. For assets, particularly intangible assets that are acquired through periodic subscriptions, the eligible investment cost is considered to be the value for the first two years inclusive of any initial one-time costs. If the full two-year cost is not incurred during the project period, subject to at least part of the cost being incurred during this period, the full value of a 2-year subscription will be reimbursed on the basis of the cost incurred during the project period.
- xi. All supplies and services may only be procured from external sources.
- xii. Approved projects shall be based and operational in Malta or Gozo.
- xiii. The IB will not be able to approve reimbursement for costs incurred on actions and/or activities that are not strictly in line with the Grant Agreement.
- xiv. The Undertaking has not been approved or granted any public funding, and will not seek public funding through other National and/or European Union funded initiatives in relation to the activities for which assistance is being requested through this measure. This includes schemes under NextGeneration EU, Cohesion Policy and any other European Union instruments or through any other form of Public Funding including schemes administered through National Funds.
- xv. The beneficiary shall ensure that greening and climate mitigation measures should be mainstreamed within the proposed investment, whilst reuse and recycling should be pursued as much as possible when disposing of redundant/replaced equipment.
- xvi. Applicants and any linked enterprises shall not bypass the maximum cumulative grant threshold of €128,400 by segmenting projects or restructuring applications across different investment schemes. The increased AI threshold of up to €100,000 shall not be taken into consideration for this cumulative cap.
- xvii. Multiple ongoing projects by the applicant and any linked enterprises under different investment schemes (including SME Enhance, SME Enhance (de Minimis), and Digitalise Your SME) are permitted, provided that the total grant awarded across these projects does not exceed €128,400. The increased AI threshold of up to €100,000 shall not be taken into consideration when determining this limit. Once a project is completed in accordance with the definition of project completion, additional applications may be submitted. The total grant amount of all ongoing projects cannot exceed €128,400 excluding the increased AI threshold of up to €100,000.

- xviii. Applicants who are not start-ups that provide Net Assets which are less than 40% of the total eligible cost shall have the total eligible cost capped proportionally to 250% of their Net Assets, or else provide a guarantee for the difference in Net Assets.
- xix. In the case of start-ups, applicants who provide Net Assets which are less than 20% of the total eligible cost shall have the total eligible cost capped proportionally to 500% of their Net Assets or else provide a guarantee for the difference in Net Assets. Moreover, applicants, who are start-ups under 3 years, with either Net Assets which are less than 20% of the total eligible cost or have negative net assets not exceeding €120,000, can opt to have the eligible cost threshold calculated on the basis of their Share Capital over the minimum share capital requirement, and this is multiplied by 10 and by 250% with the resultant amount being the maximum eligible cost on which the grant will be based upon. Furthermore, applicants with negative net assets exceeding €60,000 but not exceeding €120,000, will have the maximum aid intensity reduced by 10%.
- xx. The IB is authorized to make any checks on the determination of the size of the Undertaking and, should it be determined that the undertaking was not an SME as at the date of submission of the application, the IB reserves the right to withdraw the Grant Agreement.
- xxi. Applications submitted under the Digitalise your SME may be awarded a Grant under the *Digitalise your Business* which is funded through the NextGeneration EU.
- xxii. The IB reserves the right to refuse or withdraw an application by a potential applicant or beneficiary on the basis of actual, potential or perceived reputational harm and/or unwanted or unfavourable publicity to the IB, the Government of Malta and EU funds.

## 3 Applications

### 3.1 Application Process

The IB shall publicise the calls on fondi.eu website and will collaborate with stakeholders particularly representatives of the target group and other Government Entities to publicise the Grant Scheme to ensure the widest visibility possible.

### 3.2 Submission of Applications

Applicants must submit an online application as outlined in the call for applications. The application shall include the Undertaking's name and size, a description of the investment, including its start and end dates, the location of the investment, a list of investment costs and the amount of public funding needed for the investment amongst other requirements.

It is strongly advisable that prior to embarking on the development and submission of the application prospective applicants read these 'Guidance Notes' together with 'User Guide to the Application Form' document.

### 3.3 Documents to be submitted with the Application

1. **Declaration** - a scanned copy of the signed Declaration Form<sup>23</sup>. All the clauses are to be selected, and supporting documentation is to be provided in instances where NO is marked.
2. **De Minimis Declaration Form**<sup>24</sup> - a declaration by the single Undertaking outlining a breakdown of the *de minimis* aid applied for and/or received over a period of three years from the year of application.
3. **Applicants are to submit either one of the following requirements:**
  - a) **Investment Proposal** - to define (in detail) the following:
    - *Description of the needed investment*
      - Describe the item's function within the operations and, in brief, the need for its purchase.
    - *Technical specifications for each specific investment;*
      - These are intended to provide a baseline for comparability. The product/model may well be distinct, but it should nonetheless be possible to have a common denominator when it comes to amounts/size/ capacity/output/material etc. The minimum technical specifications do not necessarily need to be an absolute value (e.g. 64GB tablet). It can be a range (e.g. 64GB -

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<sup>23</sup> In the case that the Authorized Representative is not a Director, a Declaration of Authorization shall be submitted in addition to the Declaration form. This does not apply for Self-Employed/Sole Traders, given that the individual signing the Declaration form is the Authorized Representative. A copy of the Declaration Form can be found in the User Guide to the Application Form, and also within the online application portal..

<sup>24</sup> A copy of the most recent de minimis Declaration Form can be found in the on this page: <https://fondi.eu/business-enhance/resources/general-documents/>.

128GB Tablet), or a lower or an upper boundary (e.g. Tablets of minimum/maximum 64GB). While not intended to be overly specific, and allowing for some leeway, the applicant nonetheless needs to outline what they are looking for in the item for which aid is being requested.

- *Description of what is available on the market;*
  - There may be off-the-shelf solutions, or a completely custom-made solution is required, or a hybrid of the two can fulfil the applicant's needs. Whichever applies, the applicant is to outline which different versions or brands for the item exist on the market at present.
- *Identification of which suppliers offer the required investment and the price range for each investment;*
  - For items which have a broad range of suppliers, it is naturally expected that the market leaders are included within the list of options considered, and that the list of suppliers is sufficiently large accordingly (e.g. one cannot justifiably list just 3 suppliers of laptops, because the local market alone includes many more than 3 suppliers). A price range can be provided for the item itself, rather than by specific supplier. One is to ensure that an explanation is provided in instances where the price range is broad
- *From the options considered, those that meet targets and requirements of the applicant should be identified.*
  - If all the suppliers mentioned in the above section are considered as meeting the applicant's needs, then this is to be explicitly mentioned. If any don't, then a substantive and reasonable justification thereof is to be provided accordingly.
  - Provide brief background information on each of the suppliers identified provided, together with their website URL and/or online link of each.

or

b) **Technical Specifications s Quotations (*limited to 3 distinct items*<sup>25</sup>)-** to provide the minimum technical specifications and 3 similar quotations as follows:

- The set of minimum technical specifications against which the quotations provided were sought. These should determine the minimum characteristics of the digital solutions identified by the beneficiary, and that a supplier must provide. These should be clear, accurate and contain a description of the beneficiary's needs to enable the suppliers to provide the asset/s which meet those needs; and

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<sup>25</sup> Multiples of identical items will be considered as 1

- at least 3 similar quotations<sup>26</sup> in respect of each sub-activity in line with the set minimum technical specifications and obtained from three different external and unrelated suppliers<sup>27</sup>. These minimum technical specifications are to be clearly identified and located within all quotations provided. Quotations not meeting the requested technical specifications may not be considered by the beneficiary (*in case the project gets approved, procurement shall be done from one of the submitted quotations*).
  - Brief background information on each of the suppliers from whom quotations were gathered, together with their website URL and/or online link of each.
4. **Scoping report outlining the proposed AI cost items** (*applicable only to applications requesting the increased AI Threshold in line with Section 1.7*) - this scoping report shall include the following information:
- The relevant technical specifications of the proposed AI-related cost items
  - An overview of solutions available on the market, covering both off-the-shelf and custom-built options
  - A detailed profile and quotation from the preferred supplier, including a clear breakdown and itemised breakdown of the costs associated with the identified solutions. For consumption- or usage-based models, the report shall also include transparent cost estimates and the underlying assumptions.
  - The number of staff hours required for the implementation of the AI solution, for which staff costs are being applied for in accordance with Section 2.3.2
5. **Digital Intensity Assessment** - a pre-digitalisation project digital intensity assessment issued by the [Malta Digital Innovation Authority](#)<sup>28</sup> done together with MDIA's [Digital Maturity Assessment](#), defining the current adoption of technology. The assessment will also identify any Cyber Security, Internet of Things (IOT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data analysis, Cloud Computing or

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<sup>26</sup> During evaluation the Project Selection Committee may request further clarifications or additional quotations if not satisfied with the provided documentation.

<sup>27</sup> It is the sole responsibility of the beneficiary to ensure that the three suppliers are independent of the applicant (and, if the project is approved, the beneficiary) and of each other. There must be no influence, whether decisive or otherwise over the composition, voting, or decision-making of the organs of any undertaking involved. In addition, no family ties shall exist between the applicant (and, if the project is approved, the beneficiary) and any supplier, nor between the suppliers themselves. If it is subsequently established that the suppliers were related, this may result in a full or partial financial correction and/or recovery of the grant, as outlined in Section 7.4.

<sup>28</sup> An appointment can be set with the Malta Digital Innovation Authority by sending an email on [funding.mdia@mdia.gov.mt](mailto:funding.mdia@mdia.gov.mt)

Quantum Technology items being applied for. The Digital Intensity Assessment shall include the following:

Digital Technology	Status (Yes/No)	Details
1) Internet for at least 50% of employees		Percentage of employees and type of connection
2) Recourse to ICT Specialists		Number of specialists or outsourced services
3) Fast Broadband (30Mbps or above)		Type of connection and speed details
4) Mobile internet devices for at least 20% of people employed		Percentage of employees and type of mobile internet device provided by employer
5) A webpage or homepage		URL of webpage/homepage
6) A website with sophisticated functions		URL including the list of sophisticated functions
7) Social Media		URL of Social Media pages
8) Paying to advertise on Internet		Type of Internet advertisements
9) Buying medium-high cloud computing services		Type of cloud computing services
10) Sending e-invoices suitable for automated processing		Type of e-invoicing
11) e-Commerce web sales accounting for at least 1% of total turnover		Amount web-sales and percentage of total turnover
12) Business-to-consumer (B2C) web sales of over 10% of total web sales		Amount of B2C web sales and percentage of total web sales

6. **Compliance Certificate/s issued by the Malta Tax and Customs Administration (MTCA)** - a certificate/s issued not earlier than three months from the date of the application which contains no pending liabilities or returns; or is covered by an agreement which is being honoured, by the MTCA covering Income Tax, VAT and Final Settlement and Social Security Contributions Compliance Certificates.
  
7. **Audited Financial Statements** for the two financial years preceding the year of submission of the application shall be provided in respect to the applicant, while audited financial statements dated within the two financial years preceding the submission of the application shall be provided in respect of linked and partner enterprises<sup>29</sup>. The most recent year for the applicant must have been closed within the last 18 months.

Where the most recent financial year of the applicant closed more than 18 months prior to the submission of the application, the documents listed in the

<sup>29</sup> In line with MBR obligations of registered companies found [here](#).

first bullet point below shall also be provided. An income statement for Applicant is always required.

A single financial document containing comparative data of the annual accounts of both years under assessment will be accepted. No documents are required to be submitted where copies of the documents outlined above are already deposited with the Malta Business Registry (MBR) or the Co-Operatives Board.

- In the case of applicant, linked and partner enterprises without a legal obligation to prepare financial statements, or where the most recent available Audited Accounts of the applicant closed more than 18 months prior to the submission of the Application, the Management Accounts (Profit C Loss Statements/Income Statement and Balance Sheet/Statement of Assets and Liabilities) certified by a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) are to be provided.
- In the case of a Sole Trader/self-employed, a copy of the Income Tax Return for both two financial years prior to the year of submission of the application together with a Profit C Loss Statement, both of which are to be certified by a CPA. For the applicant only, a declaration by a CPA identifying their Current and Fixed Assets as well as their Short-Term and Long-Term Liabilities is to be provided. The most recent financial year for the applicant must have been closed within the last 18 months.
- In the case of a Start-up established not over 2 years from the date of application (*including Sole Trader/self-employed*) not having the above documentation, the Management Accounts (Profit C Loss Statements/Income Statement and Balance Sheet/Statement of Assets and Liabilities) plus Cash Flow Projections (*for a minimum of two years*) are to be provided, all of which are to be certified by a CPA.

8. Evidence of **Private Match Financing** for the project.

G. **Ethical AI and Societal Well-Being assessment** (*applicable only to applications requesting the increased AI Threshold in line with Section 1.7*) - an assessment detailing which tasks or processes will be automated or offloaded through the proposed AI solution and explain how this change will enable staff to redirect their efforts toward higher-value creative, intellectual, or relational

activities. Applicants shall sign a declaration on the forecasted classification of the AI system in line with the EU AI Act.<sup>30</sup>

This assessment must outline:

- the activities being automated,
- the expected redistribution of human effort,
- reporting on bias-mitigation, and the established mechanisms to enable user transparency and human oversight in the use of AI,
- any mitigating actions taken to ensure responsible AI adoption.

**10. Productivity Gains forecast report** (*applicable only to applications requesting the increased AI Threshold in line with Section 1.7*) - A forecast report outlining the productivity gains expected to result from the proposed investment. The report shall detail how the supported AI-related actions are anticipated to enhance operational efficiency, process performance, and overall business productivity.

**11. Supporting Documentation including NACE code Rev 2.1 confirmation<sup>31</sup>, GANTT Chart or Implementation Schedule.** Any other supporting documentation (*such as preparatory work and correspondence*) that the Applicant deems that would add value to the application.

The IB may request any additional documentation for verification purposes.

In those cases where not all the documentation is submitted with the application, applicants shall be given the opportunity to rectify the application by submitting the required documentation. The maximum period allowed for rectifications shall not exceed 2 months from the date of the rectifications letter. Applicants are to submit their missing documentation to rectify their application by said deadline. Following the submission of the rectifications, the application will be evaluated with the next available PSC meeting following the evaluation of all applications submitted in the original cut-off. If applicants fail to rectify an application by the indicated deadline in the rectifications letter, then the application shall be considered as incomplete and be rejected.

### 3.4 Acknowledgment

Once an application is submitted and confirmed, the system generates a unique reference number for the project and an acknowledgement e-mail together with the application reference number will be sent to the Applicant.

Applications will be assessed and selected as outlined in [Section 5](#) 'Assessment and Selection'. The issuance of the acknowledgement letter does not confer any obligation

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<sup>30</sup> Applicants may use the AI Classification Guide which is free of charge <https://mdia.gov.mt/services/compliance-tools/>. Applicants may avail from the MDIA AI Regulatory Compliance Help Desk on [ai.mdia@mdia.gov.mt](mailto:ai.mdia@mdia.gov.mt). Additional tools are available in the following URL: <https://ai-act-service-desk.ec.europa.eu/en>

<sup>31</sup> The NACE Rev 2.1 confirmation shall be in the form of VAT Information Sheet or else communication with the NSO Business Register including the four-digit code in the form of 11.11.

on the IB to issue the Grant towards the financing of the project. Actions may only be initiated further to the signing of the Grant Agreement.

## 4 Compliance with Community Policy

### 4.1 Payments of costs under the approved Investment

Undertakings should note that Grants awarded for actions under the Digitalise your SME are public funds. Beneficiary Undertakings should ensure that procurement of all cost items to be co-funded through the Grant Scheme is carried out in line with the principles of sound financial management.

### 4.2 State Aid Requirements

The terms and conditions of this Grant Scheme are in line with Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2831 of 13 December 2023 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to *de minimis* aid.

**The Undertaking shall ensure compliance with the rules on cumulation of aid in line with Article 5 of the *de minimis* Regulation.**

Applicants must submit with their application a duly filled in *de minimis* declaration form regarding any other *de minimis* aid received and applied for during the current year and the previous two years. The IB will ensure that the total amount of *de minimis* aid granted to the single Undertaking shall not exceed EUR 300,000 over any period of three years.

It is the responsibility of the Applicant Undertaking to seek advice and to ensure compliance with State Aid rules and requirements.

### 4.3 Equal Opportunities and non-discrimination

Beneficiary Undertakings are required to take a pro-active approach to Equal Opportunities and must ensure that at all stages of the implementation of the action/s consideration is given to Equal Opportunities.

Equal Opportunities and non-discrimination are not meant to just address gender discrimination but have a wider scope and include race, ethnicity, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation.

### 4.4 Sustainable Development

Undertakings should include Sustainable Development in the action/s and must ensure that the operation is structured in such a manner that concrete positive actions towards better sustainability and mainstreaming feature throughout. It is important that Environmental matters should also be taken into consideration at all stages of the design, development and implementation of the action and the action should be structured to avoid any related environmental damage.

### 4.5 Do No Significant Harm Principle

Beneficiary Undertakings are required to ensure that planned investments fulfil and respect the conditions of the 'do no significant harm' (DNSH) principle within the meaning of Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852.

Applicants may wish to consult with the Commission's technical guidance on the application of 'do no significant harm' under the RRF Regulation (2021/C 58/01). It covers the six environmental objectives set out in Article of Regulation (EU) No 2020/852 including: Climate change mitigation; Climate change adaptation; The sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources; The circular economy including waste

prevention and recycling; Pollution prevention and control to air, water and land; The protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

It should be noted that the 'Do No Significant Harm Assessment carried out in relation to the ERDF/CF Programme and JTF Plan 2021 2027' concluded that this measure will not have a significant impact on any of the environmental objectives and therefore does not require a substantive assessment.

## 5 Assessment and Selection

The Assessment and Selection of projects shall be undertaken by a Project Selection Committee.

Applications will be assessed against the Gateway (*eligibility*) Criteria and will proceed to be assessed against the Selection Criteria only if the application meets all the requirements of the Gateway (*eligibility*) Criteria.

Applications attaining at least 50% of the total score shall be approved for funding subject to the budget availability.

### 5.1 Gateway Criteria

The Gateway Criteria are the minimum requirements which must be met in order that any application may be considered for assessment and appraisal for selection for funding support. This stage will involve an assessment and a Due Diligence process to establish that these minimum requirements are met, namely:

1. **Complete application:** an Undertaking must present a fully compiled application together with all the requested supporting documentation, by the indicated deadline.
2. **Eligible Undertaking:** the Undertaking is an eligible Undertaking in line with these Guidance Notes.
3. **Eligible action:** the action for which the Applicant is asking for support is eligible and at least includes an eligible activity.
4. **Match Financing:** the Applicant has submitted evidence as to its capacity to match finance the project from private sources.
5. **Total Eligible Cost to Net Assets Ratio:** the Applicant has a Total Eligible Cost to Net Assets Ratio of more than 2%.

### 5.2 Financial Viability Check

Applications with a Grant Request of more than €60,000<sup>32</sup> shall be subject to a Financial Viability Check<sup>33</sup>.

We will assess your financial capacity by checking that your organisation:

- has sufficient liquidity (it is capable to cover the short-term commitments)
- is financially autonomous (it is capable to cover the debt costs)
- is solvent (it is capable to cover its medium and long-term commitments)
- is profitable (it is generating profits or at least has self-financing capacity).

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<sup>32</sup> The IB reserves the right to perform the Financial Viability Check even when the Grant requested is less than €60,000.

<sup>33</sup> Applicants can use a simulator of the Financial Viability Check which can be accessed from: <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/lfv/lfvSimulation.do>

For natural persons, the financial viability is based on two criteria, liquidity and solvency.

The financial viability of a participant will always be rated low if:

1. The financial statements contain serious qualifications.
2. The applicant is a newly established entity that has not yet closed any accounts.
3. There were substantial financial findings relating to the financial capacity in an audit of the Audit Authority, Commission, the Court of Auditors or an OLAF investigation within the last two years.
4. The applicant has been involved in serious administrative errors or fraud.
5. The applicant is subject to pending legal procedures or judicial proceedings for serious administrative errors or fraud.
6. The applicant is subject to an attachment order.

Should the financial viability check result in a low rating, the IB may apply certain conditions such as:

- Require Applicant to provide a bank guarantee for any advance payment
- Not provide any advance payment or interim reimbursement
- Require Applicant to provide a guarantee covering the grant amount (or part thereof)
- Reject the Grant application

Notwithstanding the above, the IB understands that even though a newly established entity that has not yet closed any accounts is by default considered as *low rating*, it understands the special nature of the enterprise and thus may decide not to impose any conditions.

Moreover, the IB reserve the right to impose any of the conditions even if the financial viability check results in *high rating*.

The Financial Viability Assessment shall remain valid for 18 months and can be used for any application within said period.

### 5.3 Selection Criteria

Only applications that meet all the Gateway (*eligibility*) Criteria shall proceed for assessment under the Selection Criteria. The Project Selection Committee may at this stage request clarifications from the Applicant. As part of the assessment and appraisal process, a score is awarded for each Selection Criteria. Applications scoring at least 50% of the Selection criteria shall be awarded subject to budget availability. Budget will be allocated in order by receipt of a complete application (i.e. at the date of any rectifications being submitted) and the actual date of submission will be taken into account.

The total maximum score under the Selection Criteria is 100. Applications will be assessed and evaluated against the Selection Criteria outlined hereunder.

- Risk Assessment

- Excellence
- Impact and Sustainability
- Quality and Efficiency of implementation

Criteria	Definition	Score
Risk Assessment	<p><b>Qualitative assessment of Applicant - 5</b> Applications will be risk assessed in relation to the age of the Applicant, business experience, track record of the management and controlling shareholders.</p>	10
	<p><b>Duration of the Project - 5</b> Applications will be risk assessed in relation to the proposed duration of the project vis-à-vis the implementation timelines in the respective guidance notes. Such assessment shall take into account potential implementation delays which may stretch the proposed project duration and have a negative impact on absorption of funds.</p>	
	<p><b>Implementation Risks linked to the duration of the Project - max 0pts (-5pts Lowest)</b> This section will carry negative marking to reflect project implementation risks linked to the duration of the proposed activities. The duration of the project will be assessed in terms of how realistic it is to complete the project within the indicated timeframe. The more complex the activities, the more likely that the project will experience delays and therefore the lower the score.</p>	
Excellence	<p><b>Quality of the proposed project concept through its main characteristics - 5</b> The Application Form should be of good quality and provide clear information that can be readily understood by anyone, even those not familiar with the project. The proposed project concept should not be run-of-the-mill.</p> <p>The evaluation will be assessing the overall quality of the proposed project, the project background, context and need for the project, the project's objectives, expected results and resources required. The Application form is to evidence that the enterprise has recognised the need to understand new technology and utilise it.</p>	30
	<p><b>Coherence and Clarity of the Application- 10</b> The evaluation will be assessing the project's work plan, strategy, and quality of the application. Coherent proposals supported by quantitative data and market research will be rewarded.</p>	

	<p><b>Action is ambitious and is addressing an identified gap within the enterprise and/or the specific sector the enterprise operates in - 10</b>                  The action will be assessed in terms of the extent of identified gaps (both in the enterprise and/or the sector) it addresses. The evaluation will focus on the novelty of the concepts and new approaches proposed by the project.</p> <p><i>Factual and statistical evidence to back up the justification will render the application more robust.</i></p> <p><b>Action seeks to maximise the internationalisation of the Applicant - 5</b>                  The application will be evaluated in terms of the project’s potential to support the Applicant to strengthen its international presence.</p>	
<p><b>Impact and Sustainability</b></p>	<p><b>Applicant’s plan to make the enterprise more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges ahead - 5</b>                  The application and the investment shall be assessed against this criterion.</p> <p><b>Project results in improvements in the Undertaking’s business model - 5</b>                  The application will be evaluated in relation to the proposed impact on the sustainability of the business model. Applicants are to identify the benefits which shall emanate as a result of the project.</p> <p><b>Project in line with National Policies and the Programme’s horizontal priorities: Environmental Sustainability and Equal Opportunities - 5</b>                  The application will be assessed in relation to potential impact on National Policies linked to the programme and to the effective integration of the Programme’s horizontal priorities being Environmental Sustainability and Equal Opportunities.</p> <p><b>The return on investment (ROI) and potential cost reductions - 10</b>                  An assessment of the project’s impact vis-à-vis the return on investment (ROI), by dividing the projected increase in turnover by the cost of the items being applied for. The application will also be assessed on the potential cost reductions to the operations of the Applicant through the reduction in the cost-to-sales ratio</p> <p><b>Size of Undertaking - 10</b>                  Proposals submitted by Micro and Small enterprises will be rewarded.</p>	<p><b>35</b></p>
<p><b>Quality and efficiency of implementation</b></p>	<p><b>A holistic Investment - 5</b>                  Projects that propose a holistic investment tied to a clear objective will be rewarded.</p>	<p><b>25</b></p>

	<p><b>Quality, readiness and timeliness of the proposed project - 10</b>          Projects are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• present a GANNT Chart/Implementation Schedule of the proposed actions</li> <li>• include an assessment of the potential implementation risks, the probability of these risks happening and the identification of measures to mitigate same risks</li> <li>• demonstrate the capacity to deliver the project and that they have a contingency plan to compensate for adverse effects on timetable, expenditure, and outputs.</li> </ul> <p>Applications showing that their proposal is in an advanced state of readiness, such as having already assessed the options obtained or in possession of required licences/permits, shall be rewarded. Evidence of such documents is to be provided with the application.</p> <p><b>Operational Capacity and allocation of human resources towards the implementation of the project including the current organisation’s structure - 5</b>          The capacity to implement the project is part of the commitment of the Applicant. The evaluation will be assessing the allocation of human resources, both internal and external, towards the project to ensure its successful implementation and sustainability. Experience in the implementation of projects co-financed through Structural Funds, other EU programmes or own funds shall be rewarded. The Application must not only include the segregation of the level of management and control but shall also include an explanation of the expertise of the personnel in each role. This shall be complemented by any organigram or description provided.</p> <p><b>The application shall include the names and ID numbers of the human resources working on the project.</b></p> <p>Should applicants fail to provide sufficient information the IB may apply certain conditions to the Grant.</p> <p><b>Operational Capacity and Operating Costs related to the sustainability of the investment post-project including the post-project organisation’s structure - 5</b>          The evaluation will be assessing the applicant’s Operational Capacity to the sustainability of the investment post-project through any Management and Control Systems in place as well as the operating costs related to the investment post-project.</p> <p>The Application is to demonstrate quality standards adopted by the undertaking and include internal</p>	
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	<p>procedures, processes and resources in place. The application should demonstrate quality planning, quality control, quality assurance and quality improvement in relation to the proposed project.</p> <p>The Application must not only include the segregation of the level of management and control but shall also include an explanation of the expertise of the personnel in each role. This shall be complemented by an updated post-project organigram or description provided. Moreover, the application must also include the operating costs of the investment for the duration of the durability.</p> <p>Should applicants fail to provide sufficient information the IB may apply certain conditions to the Grant.</p>	
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#### 5.4 Unsuccessful Applications

Unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing by the IB.

#### 5.5 Appeals

An independent Appeals Board shall be appointed.

Applicants whose application was not selected may submit motivated representations within 10 working days from the date of notification by the IB.

The Appeals Board shall assess and review the submitted representation, and notify the Applicant of its decision. The decision of the Appeals Board shall be final.

#### 5.6 Acceptance Letter

The IB shall issue a funding acceptance letter to selected applicants. The Funding acceptance letter shall include any conditions as outlined by the Project Selection Committee. It should be noted that a positive decision at this stage is not a guarantee of funding. All the conditions set out in the funding acceptance letter would need to be discharged before the Grant Agreement can be signed.

#### 5.7 Grant Agreement

The IB shall liaise with the Applicant with a view to concluding the Grant Agreement (GA) which shall include any conditions as outlined by the IB. The GA is the formal agreement between the IB and the Applicant. The GA is the legally binding document and sets out the terms of the grant. The IB will work through the terms and any conditions which must be discharged prior to entering the GA with the Applicant. When the IB is satisfied that any conditions have been discharged, it will issue the GA and submit two copies to the Applicant who will sign both copies with the IB keeping one copy and the other kept by the Beneficiary.

## 6 Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting

### 6.1 Implementation

#### 6.1.1 Filing System

The beneficiary is to keep and maintain a separate filing system for the approved investment and may opt to keep an electronic system. Nonetheless, the filing system, regardless of whether it is electronic or hard copies, shall be made available and be easily referenced when monitoring and audit visits are conducted by the respective authorised entities. The beneficiary is obliged to keep all the documentation related to the operation for audit purposes for 3 years following the final payment to the beneficiary of the assisted operation. The sample proposed filing system folder can be downloaded from [here](#).

#### 6.1.2 Inventory

The Beneficiary is to fill in an Inventory of the fixed assets financed from the project and include the required details on the standard template which is available in [Annex II](#) and is obliged to keep an updated version of such inventory. Assets must remain associated with the enterprise throughout the durability period.

The inventory shall be frequently updated to include the relevant details of the assets purchased and list any equipment that has undergone any alterations following acquisition. The list is to be signed and certified correct by the Authorized Representative or Project Manager and made available to the IB upon request.

#### 6.1.3 Payments

**Cash disbursements are strictly prohibited.** The total expenditure must be paid by the beneficiary through transparent, traceable bank transactions. Payments should be made through an identifiable bank account as indicated in the Financial Identification Form submitted by the beneficiary<sup>34</sup> and to the identified bank account of the Service Provider/Supplier as outlined in the respective invoice or in the Supplier Financial Identification Form.

#### 6.1.4 Project Manager

The Project Manager is identified in the application form and is the person responsible for the implementation of the project on a day-to-day basis. The Project Manager is the beneficiary's point of contact with the IB and should be available and reachable within reasonable timeframes to discuss the project on a periodical basis as required.

The beneficiary shall ensure that a Project Manager is assigned throughout the full implementation of the project and should there be a change in the Project Manager a [Change in Project Manager form](#), downloaded from [here](#), shall be submitted via email on [msd.eufunds@gov.mt](mailto:msd.eufunds@gov.mt).

#### 6.1.5 Changes and amendments to the investment project

Issues may arise during the implementation of an investment project that necessitate a deviation from the original application as reflected in the Grant Agreement. In such

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<sup>34</sup> The form (to be signed and dated) will need to be submitted at reimbursement stage by the beneficiary.

cases, the beneficiary is to notify the IB immediately and submit a written request including a justification for the change.

For any changes related to the main component/s of the operation or any other sub-activities approved under the activity **Digital Solutions** (*as identified in Section 2.3.1*) the written request shall be accompanied by either an updated *Investment Proposal* for the said item or else 3 similar quotations together with the new technical specifications (*in line with the document provided at application*). In case of the latter, should the request be approved, procurement shall be done based on one of the submitted quotations.

For any changes relating to items approved under the increased AI threshold (*as identified in Section 2.3.2*) the written request shall be accompanied by an updated scoping report.

No expenditure related to actions and activities impacted with such deviations may be incurred by the beneficiary without approval issued by IB in this regard.

Invariably, deviations may not impact on the substance of the original application and on which the operation was evaluated and selected.

In no instance will requests for an increase in the budgetary allocations resulting in an increase in the total Grant amount as outlined in the Grant Agreement be accepted.

Beneficiaries may request any extension for a minimum block of 6 months, marks permitting. In this case a deduction of 1% on the original Grant Amount awarded per each block of 6 months shall be applied, even if an extension covering a period of over 24 months is requested. Each operation is allowed an extension equivalent to one block of 6 months for which no deduction shall apply. For any operations that request an extension that goes beyond 36 months, programme and scheme permitting, a deduction of 2% of the original Grant amount shall apply for each block of 6 months.

Any requests for extensions shall be submitted via email prior to the end date. If the request an extension is requested after the end date has elapsed, an additional penalty of 5% on the original Grant amount shall apply. This 5% shall be applied over and above any deductions per each block of 6 months and regardless of whether it is the first request or not.

In each case, should a Beneficiary request a change which reduces the Grant amount, any deductions will be done on the original Grant Amount and deducted following the reduction of the Grant.

#### **6.1.6 Retention of Documentation**

The Beneficiary has the obligation to retain all related documents for control and audit purposes, for 3 years following the final payment to the beneficiary of the project. The Beneficiary must also co-operate with the IB and other monitoring and audit bodies entrusted with such functions with respect to the granting of aid under this scheme, for the duration of 3 years in light of audits and other controls.

## 6.2 Procurement Process

### 6.2.1 General

The procurement process shall be compliant with Community Policy as identified in [Section 4](#) of the Guidance Notes.

Moreover, eligible expenditure should meet the following criteria:

- (i) Must be incurred by the Beneficiary;
- (ii) Must be incurred within the period and for actions set out in the Grant Agreement;
- (iii) Must be identifiable and verifiable, recorded in the beneficiary's accounts in accordance with the applicable accounting standards;
- (iv) Must comply with the applicable national and EU legislation including law on taxes, labour and social security; and
- (v) Must be reasonable and comply with the principle of sound financial management.

Beneficiaries should avoid situations that could present conflicts of interest when undertaking procurement. All procurement of goods, works and services is to be made from sources external and unrelated to the beneficiary Undertaking.<sup>35</sup>

VAT is not an eligible cost and beneficiaries should ensure that VAT and any other taxes should be quoted separately by suppliers.

All financial documentation should be presented in the Euro denomination, and where this is not possible the beneficiary should convert the foreign currency using the applicable daily exchange reference rate issued by the European Central Bank and which may be accessed through: <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/exchange/eurofxref/html/index.en.html>

The beneficiary should clearly indicate the rate applied. The exchange rate should be the rate applicable on the day the payment was made.

Unless the invoice issued by a Service Provider/Supplier includes the Bank Account identification where the payment is to be affected, the beneficiary shall request the Service Provider/Supplier to fill in the Supplier Financial Identification Form provided by the IB in [Annex IV](#).

Failure by the beneficiary to observe the requirements may impact the eligibility of the expenditure and the investment project itself. The beneficiary may be subject to loss of funds through the imposition of financial corrections and/or recovery of funds if non-compliance is observed at any stage. The Beneficiary shall be liable to pay back the amount identified to be ineligible/non-compliant with these rules by the IB, the Managing Authority the Audit Authority, and any other body responsible for the monitoring of expenditure.

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<sup>35</sup> The fact that the buyer does not control the seller is not sufficient for fulfilling this criterion. The parties must be unrelated and there should be no influence (decisive or not) on the composition, voting or decisions of the organs of an Undertaking or family ties between the buyer and seller.

### 6.2.2 Purchasing of items under the activity Digital Solutions

Beneficiaries shall procure from the preferred solutions identified in the *Investment Proposal* or else one of the quotations provided with the Application<sup>36</sup>. In those instances where Beneficiary had a change approved in line with [Section 6.1.5](#), then the Beneficiary shall procure either from the preferred solutions identified in the updated *Investment Proposal* or else one of the quotations provided.

The following documents are to be kept and presented with the claim for reimbursement, together with those identified in [Annex III](#):

- Copy of Invoice
- Confirmation of Purchase
- Copy of Fiscal Receipt (*where a tax invoice is not provided*)
- Copy of Proof of Payment (*Copy of bank transfer payment/bank cheque encashment image*)
- Copy of Bank Statement identifying the transaction/s **Certified by a Certified Public Accountant**

### 6.2.3 Purchasing of items approved under the increased AI Threshold

Beneficiaries shall procure from the solution/s identified in the *scoping report* provided with the Application. In those instances where Beneficiary had a change approved in line with [Section 6.1.5](#), then the Beneficiary shall procure in line with the updated scoping report.

The following documents are to be kept and presented with the claim for reimbursement, together with those identified in [Annex III](#):

- Copy of Invoice
- Confirmation of Purchase
- Copy of Fiscal Receipt (*where a tax invoice is not provided*)
- Copy of Proof of Payment (*Copy of bank transfer payment/bank cheque encashment image*)
- Copy of Bank Statement identifying the transaction/s **Certified by a Certified Public Accountant**

For Staff Costs, the following documentation shall be submitted:

- Names, ID Card numbers and positions of the employees involved
- Documentation issued by the service provider confirming that the tasks identified in the scoping report have been fully performed and confirm the total number hours performed by such employees. Such documentation shall include logs or records, between the supplier and the beneficiary,

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<sup>36</sup> For the sake of clarity, the beneficiary is permitted to procure from a supplier that was not identified in the investment proposal or from which no quotation was submitted with the application, provided that the supplier is external and unrelated, the items meet or exceed the original technical specifications, and all other conditions outlined in these Guidance Notes are fully adhered to. The IB reserves the right to carry out further checks to verify compliance with these requirements.

demonstrating the performance of the tasks and the quantification of the man-hours allocated.

Consumption or usage-based models will be assessed on the basis of actual expenditure incurred, supported by invoices and proof of payment. Where variability exists, reimbursement will be capped at the lower of:

- i. the amount approved in the Grant Agreement, or
- ii. the value derived by extrapolating the lowest monthly consumption evidenced in the submitted invoices at claim for reimbursement over a 24-month period<sup>37</sup>.

This approach ensures budgetary certainty while recognising the variable nature of usage-based pricing models.

Beneficiaries shall be required to submit supporting documentation after the first year of implementation to confirm that consumption remains broadly in line with the approved estimates. At the end of the eligible period, the IB will assess the total eligible expenditure incurred. Where actual eligible costs fall materially below the amount reimbursed, a financial recovery in line with Section 7.4 will apply, allowing for a reasonable tolerance of 5% to account for normal usage fluctuations.

### 6.2.3 Purchasing of Subscription-based Software

The purchasing of subscription-based Software shall be procured in line with the above procurement guidelines and the cost of a 2-year subscription<sup>38</sup> will be considered as the eligible cost item. Together with the Claim for Reimbursement, and the documents identified in [Annex III](#), a declaration from the supplier/service provider<sup>39</sup> shall be provided indicating the following:

- Date of Purchase and/or installation
- Details confirming the type and version of the Software
- Details of the location, including hardware serial numbers, where the software is installed
- Terms of Licence
- Pricing Plan<sup>40</sup>

### 6.2.4 Award Criteria

For procurement of activities under *Digital Solutions* the reimbursement shall be pegged to the invoice amount, or the expenditure approved in the Grant Agreement whichever is the lowest.

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<sup>37</sup> If the duration of the operation was less than two years, beneficiaries shall provide invoices and receipts covering the period up to the submission of the claim for reimbursement, including evidence of monthly consumption. Any subsequent receipts shall be submitted once the corresponding payments have been affected.

<sup>38</sup> If the operation duration was less than two years, then receipts covering up to the submission of the claim for reimbursement are to be provided. Further receipts are to be submitted once they are paid.

<sup>39</sup> If the subscription-based software is bought online and a declaration from the supplier/service provider could not be provided, such declaration shall be provided by the beneficiary.

<sup>40</sup> Reimbursement to be capped to the cheapest price option in line with requirements identified in the technical specifications.

### 6.3 Monitoring

Effective monitoring is an important aspect which needs to be undertaken to ensure efficient and effective implementation and in ensuring that the targeted outcomes are achieved.

#### 6.3.1 Monitoring by the Beneficiary

The beneficiary has the responsibility of ensuring effective monitoring of the implementation of the action. This responsibility goes beyond the achievement of the results but also that of monitoring the efficient implementation of the assisted intervention. The beneficiary must keep documentary evidence of the implementation including the filing system, progress and final implementation reports, photographic evidence, and any necessary pertinent documentation providing an audit trail of the actions and activities within the implemented operation.

#### 6.3.2 Physical/Online on-the-spot checks by the IB

The IB will conduct physical or online visits<sup>41</sup> to conduct checks and management verifications on the implementation of the project. Prior to such visit, the beneficiary is to submit an updated copy of the inventory and during the visit shall make available all documentation and records considered relevant to the project. During such visit, the IB will also physically check the procured investments and cross check their relevant details with the inventory. The IB shall draw up a report following the visits which will include the findings and any corrective action required because of the finding of the visit and the checks conducted.

The IB may make enquiries with the Malta Association of Credit Management to carry out the necessary checks in line with the Regulations and Good Governance principles and with other competent Authorities, including but not limited to Jobs Plus, to verify any information submitted.

The IB retain the right to conduct any unannounced monitoring visits at its sole discretion.

#### 6.3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation Activities

The beneficiary is bound to co-operate and contribute to all monitoring and evaluation activities organised by the IB, the Managing Authority, Audit Authority, the European Commission as well as other Authorities. This may include contribution through participation in surveys, events and in providing information to be included in publications and online media.

### 6.4 Reporting

A periodical '[Progress Report](#)' may be requested to be submitted in line with the indicated schedule:

Period Covered	Submission Deadline
1 January - 30 June	31 July
1 July - 31 December	31 January

<sup>41</sup> Depending on the nature of the investment

A 'Final Implementation Report' is to be submitted together with the final claim for reimbursement, following the completion of all the assisted activities as outlined in the Grant Agreement.

In section 6.5 'Reimbursement', guidance is provided to the beneficiary when to provide progress reports (*falling outside of the timelines presented in the table above*) in line with the submission of respective claims for reimbursement.

The IB shall carry out on-the-spot checks during and after the project implementation timeframe.

### 6.5 Advance Payments

Beneficiaries may be entitled for Advance Payment/s as specified in the Grant Agreement. The total amount of Advance Payments shall not exceed 40% of the total eligible Grant amount.

#### 6.5.1 1<sup>st</sup> Advance Payment

**Milestone** - Signing of the Agreement

**Amount** - For applications under de minimis - 50% of the 7% Flat Rate for Indirect Cost (*as identified under 2.3*).

**Payment Trigger** - Signing of the Agreement

#### 6.5.2 2<sup>nd</sup> Advance Payment

**Milestone** - Confirmation of purchase of the main component/s as identified in the Grant Agreement

**Amount** - For applications under de minimis - 30% of the eligible Grant amount of such component/s as identified in the Grant Agreement.

**Payment Trigger** - Invoice from supplier of main component/s

**Additional Information** - Such component/s is to be fully paid, delivered and operational within the calendar year of the advance payment. Copies of proof of payment and receipts are to be provided to the IB by the upcoming end of April following the advance payment.

### 6.6 Reimbursement

Beneficiaries may present a claim/s for reimbursement upon completion of the project or upon completion of any identified targets for planned investments identified in the Application Form and as accepted in the Grant Agreement.

Claim/s for reimbursement may be presented together with a Progress Report to the IB once the beneficiary has effectively reached the set target and in line with the conditions of Section 6.6.1.

Claim/s for Reimbursement shall follow the sample folder structure downloaded [here](#) and be submitted as soft copy in .Zip format to [msd.eufunds@gov.mt](mailto:msd.eufunds@gov.mt). This with the exception of the *Claim for Reimbursement, Annex I to the Claim* and the *Report by the*

*Authorized Representative*, which are either to be submitted as originally signed hard copies or else digitally signed with a Qualified Signature (QES).

#### 6.6.1 Interim Claim/s for Reimbursement

**Milestone and Amount** - Delivery of the main component/s as identified in the Grant Agreement. The amount for reimbursement shall offset any advance payments made. The maximum amount eligible for interim reimbursements shall not exceed 60% of the grant amount as identified in the Grant Agreement with an additional 10% if such components are operational, net of any advance payments.

**Payment Trigger** - Receipt of claim for reimbursement accompanied by a Progress Report from the beneficiary. Verification by the IB that the **investment is in place and/or operational (if requesting the additional 10%)**. The IB retains the discretion to request the Beneficiary to present expert reports to substantiate any claims presented, when and as required.

#### 6.6.2 Final Claim for Reimbursement

**Milestone and Amount** - Final claim for reimbursement including all the remaining eligible expenditure, being the remaining amount of the main component/s of the operation, any other items approved and the remaining balance of the 7% Flat Rate for Indirect Cost (as identified under 2.3), net of any advance payments. For beneficiaries who have benefited from the increased AI threshold, the MDIA top-up on the additional AI threshold shall not be reimbursed as part of the final claim for reimbursement. The reimbursement of this top-up shall be affected in accordance with the provisions set out under Section 6.6.3.

**Payment Trigger** - Receipt of claim for reimbursement accompanied by a Final Report from the Beneficiary. Verification by the IB that the investment is in place and operational. The IB retains the discretion to request the Beneficiary to present expert reports to substantiate any claim presented, when and as required.

Each claim for reimbursement shall include the documentation identified in [Annex III](#).

The IB may request further documentation where and as necessary and the reimbursement request will only be processed once the IB is satisfied that the reimbursement criteria have been met.

**It is the beneficiary's responsibility to ensure that reimbursement requests, including all the required supporting documentation, are submitted to the IB by not later than 30 September 2026, or on a later date as identified by the IB.**

Reimbursement requests are expected to be submitted to the IB within 3 calendar months from the end date of the operation as identified in the Grant Agreement and/or approval for extensions. Failure to submit the claim within such period shall incur a deduction of 0.5% of the original Grant amount awarded for every month, or part thereof, that the beneficiary doesn't submit the claim.

### 6.6.3 Reimbursement of MDIA top-up on the additional AI threshold

**Milestone and Amount** - Actions implemented in accordance with the original Ethical AI and Societal Well-Being assessment, together with the attainment of the productivity gains identified. The amount eligible is the 10% MDIA top-up on the additional AI threshold.

**Payment Trigger** - Receipt of a claim for reimbursement, submitted one year after project completion, and accompanied by the following documentation:

- An **updated Ethical AI and Societal Well-Being report**, demonstrating that the actions have been implemented in line with the original assessment. The report shall be subject to verification by the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA); and
- A **post-implementation report** outlining the actual productivity gains achieved as a result of the AI investment.

### 6.7 Payment Process

The IB shall ensure that every effort is made to process the payment without undue delay from receipt of a complete Claim for Reimbursement, and further to the resolution of any clarifications sought from the beneficiary and is satisfied that the assisted intervention has been implemented in line with the Grant Agreement and the pertinent regulations. Once the claim for reimbursement is processed, further checks may be conducted by the EU Payments Unit before the execution of the payment. The IB shall not be held liable for any delays in the payment process, or for any overruling by a superior authority of its initial approval of payment. Should the Beneficiary take his case to the Arbitration as identified in [Section 7.5](#), the payment process shall be put on hold until such a decision is given.

### 6.8 Double Financing

In line with the provisions of Article 191 (3) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, it is a fundamental principle that **in no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the budget**. The IB reserves the right to share all the information related to the supported activities with other public entities to ensure that no other public funds were made available to the Undertaking in respect of the same activity. Funding for the same action from any other source of public funds is prohibited and will result in claw back (recovery) of funds.

## 7 Audit and Control

### 7.1 Internal Control

The beneficiary has the responsibility to put in place and maintain control arrangements to ensure proper and sound financial management of the funds. The beneficiary shall ensure that a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code is maintained for all transactions related to the operation without prejudice to national accounting rules. In the case where the beneficiary is implementing operations supported through different Schemes co-financed through European Structural and Investment Funds, a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code must be maintained for each operation.

### 7.2 Accounting Treatment

#### 7.2.1 Enterprises with the obligation to prepare annual financial statements

Use of an Adequate Accounting Code (*a Nominal Ledger Account dedicated to the scheme*) in an existing computerised Accounting System: in this case, beneficiaries must make provisions to open a new Accounting Code in their Nominal Ledger, where all transactions related to the operation will be posted. All entries must be easily identifiable and retrievable, as well as auditable. Beneficiaries may make use of Journal Entries. The same principles apply if a strictly separate accounting system is opted for.

Beneficiaries must comply with generally accepted accounting principles and practices as defined by Article 3(1) of LN. 19 of 2009 Accountancy Profession (Accounting and Auditing Standards) Regulations. This shall mean that beneficiaries are to adhere either to:

- i. International Accounting Standards<sup>42</sup>; or
- ii. General Accounting Principles for qualifying private or small and medium-sized entities as may be prescribed by regulations, directives or guidelines issued from time to time in terms of the Accountancy Professions Act.<sup>43</sup>

#### 7.2.2 Enterprises with no obligation to prepare annual financial statements

A separate Bank Account and/or a record showing full details of expenditure paid and funds received related to the operation (*e.g. spreadsheet*) must be kept.

#### 7.2.3 Audit Visits

**It is pertinent to note that audit visits may be conducted without prior notice, throughout the different phases of the action including after completion of the action.**

Beneficiaries should ensure that the Authorized Representative and Project Manager are available during the audit. All the documentation should be available in the designated project file and access to the documentation is to be facilitated, as may be requested by the auditors.

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<sup>42</sup> Particularly the International Accounting Standard (IAS) 20: Accounting for Government Grants and Disclosure of Government Assistance.

<sup>43</sup> For financial reporting periods commencing on or after 1st January 2016 SL 281.05 (General Accounting Principles for Small and Medium-Sized Entities) Regulations.

#### 7.2.4 Audit Follow-up

Further to the conclusion of the audit, the auditors will draft a report outlining all the findings and any pertinent recommendations. If clarifications are required, the auditors will seek feedback from both the IB and the beneficiary. The beneficiary is obliged to cooperate and provide the requested feedback, data, and information by the indicated deadlines and without undue delays.

#### 7.3 Irregularities

Irregularities may be identified during different stages of the operation because of the different checks and audits carried out by different bodies, including the beneficiary. Irregularities may be identified also through other means such as fiscal controls and evaluations, receipt of complaints or information which may also be anonymous and public domain information.

The Beneficiary is responsible to **report** any irregularity detected **without delay** to the IB.

#### 7.4 Financial Recovery and Correction

In those instances where an irregularity necessitates the recovery of funds, the individual/organisation that identified the irregularity must ensure that the recovery procedures are initiated immediately.

It is pertinent to note that failure to apply rules and regulations can result in irregularities which in turn could result to financial corrections, which in certain cases may lead to a recovery of up to 100% of the payment. The applicable recovery rates will be determined in line with the guidelines issued by the European Commission and in terms of State Aid Regulations.

#### 7.5 Malta Arbitration Centre

Any dispute, controversy or claim arising out of or relating to this contract, or the breach, termination or invalidity thereof, shall be settled by arbitration in accordance with Part IV (Domestic Arbitration) of the Malta Arbitration Act and the Arbitration Rules of the Malta Arbitration Centre as at present in force.

In the case of any dispute, controversy or claim arising out of or relating to any financial recovery and/or financial correction, or the breach, termination or invalidity thereof the Grant Agreement, beneficiaries may elect to open a claim to be settled by arbitration in accordance with Part IV (Domestic Arbitration) of the Malta Arbitration Act and the Arbitration Rules of the Malta Arbitration Centre as at present in force.

In such an event the applicant and the IB agrees that:

- a) the appointing authority shall be the Malta Arbitration Centre
- b) the number of arbitrators shall be one
- c) the place of arbitration shall be Malta
- d) the language(s) to be used in the proceedings shall be Maltese or English
- e) the applicable substantive law shall be Maltese National Law
- f) the award shall be final and binding and there shall be no appeal

g) the arbitrator shall decide ex aequo et bono.

If the beneficiary accepts the reimbursement than he will be forfeiting the right to open a claim with the Malta Arbitration centre.

## 8 Information and Publicity

Beneficiary undertakings are responsible for ensuring proper visibility of interventions assisted through this Grant Scheme, part-financed by the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund 2021-2027.

All communication and publicity measures by Beneficiaries must acknowledge support from the European Union and the respective Fund in line with Section II 'Transparency of implementation of the Funds and communication on programmes' Article 50 and Annex IX of The Common Provision Regulation (EU) No. 2021/1060.

Visibility measures should be proportionate and reflect the scale of assistance and the nature of the project.

Beneficiaries are to seek the guidance of the IB prior to embarking on publicity and visibility actions. Failure to fully comply with the visibility and publicity requirements will result in financial corrections and loss of funds. The beneficiary is responsible to keep evidence of compliance such as copies of printed documentation, photographic evidence of participation at fairs, and of any commemorative publicity and posters affixed throughout the implementation of the project.

### 8.1 Public Notification

In line with the principle of transparency all awarded grants are to be made publicly available on [www.fondi.eu](http://www.fondi.eu) and are to be registered in a central State aid register set at national or EU level.

Such register shall include the following details:

- the identification of the beneficiary,
- the aid amount,
- the granting date,
- the aid instrument, and
- the sector involved on the basis of the statistical classification of economic activities in the Union ('NACE classification').

### 8.2 Commemorative Publicity

Permanent commemorative publicity shall be installed, within 1 month from completion of the investment project<sup>44</sup> as follows:

- In a prominent site within the premises that is accessible to the general public, such as reception area
- In any section/area where any financed investment is located and/or affixed to the financed investment in case this is mobile.

Permanent publicity is to be produced as follows:

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<sup>44</sup> Beneficiaries are to liaise with the IB prior to installation of the commemorative publicity

- **Dimensions:** Proportionate to the size of the operation and legible by passers-by, clients etc. However, the minimum size standard is A4 (0.210m × 0.297m)
- **Suggested background:** Copper, Bronze, Silver, Chrome, or Perspex
- **Fonts and Sizes:** Font in proportion to size of plaque. The beneficiary is to liaise with the IB to determine font type and size.

All logos and emblems can be downloaded from [here](#).



### 8.3 Stickers

In the case of purchasing of hardware, the Beneficiary might decide to affix a sticker to the procured investment. Also, in the case of purchasing of software, a sticker<sup>46</sup> may be affixed to the hardware on which the procured software is installed on. The beneficiary is to liaise with the IB whether the stickers shall replace the commemorative publicity. The stickers shall be as follow:



<sup>45</sup> Beneficiaries are to liaise with IB regarding the name of Scheme and logos to be used for Commemorative Publicity.

<sup>46</sup> Beneficiaries are to liaise with IB regarding the logos to be used.



## G Durability

It is the beneficiary's responsibility to ensure compliance with the Durability requirements of assisted operations in line with the applicable Guidance Notes and the Grant Agreement, failure of which may result in recovery of funds.

- a) The beneficiary is to retain ownership of fixed assets purchased through EU funds and should ensure that the acquired assets are kept in good working order throughout and after the operation life and for the period as outlined in the applicable Guidance Notes.
- b) If an asset is faulty and/or damaged it should be replaced at the supplier's or the beneficiary's expense - whether under guarantee or not - the replacement must perform the same function and be of the same or higher specifications as the asset being replaced.
- c) If an asset is replaced, both the old and new serial numbers must be retained.
- d) The beneficiary shall ensure that the relevant publicity is present on project site (refer to [Section 8 - Information and Publicity](#)).
- e) In the case of assets purchased through a subscription; evidence of all payments paid throughout the durability period shall be kept.

During the durability period, the IB shall check the operation at least once and shall verify that the operation is not subject to any of the following:

- a) a cessation or transfer of a productive activity outside the programme area (for 2021-2027 operations 'outside the NUTS level 2 region in which it received support')
- b) a change in ownership of an item of infrastructure which gives to a firm or a public body any undue advantage
- c) a substantial change affecting its nature, objectives or implementation conditions which would result in undermining its original objectives.

Moreover, during such period beneficiaries will be asked to provide financial information (*where this is not available on the MBR*) including but not limited to:

- Turnover generated during the durability years
- Percentage of turnover attributed as a result of the investment
- Gross and Net Profit

Non-compliance to the above could result in the full/partial recovery of the grant as identified in [Section 7.4](#).

## 10 Data Protection

Data and information collected and held by the IB in relation to the financed action will be transferred to the Planning and Priorities Coordination Division and may also be transferred to official third parties in order to fulfil the IB's functions, in line with Community obligations according to law and in line with the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) and any amendments thereof.

Information and any data provided by the potential beneficiaries and beneficiary will be used for the sole purpose for which they are intended, that is, (i) verification procedures; and (ii) evaluation and monitoring purposes in line with Regulation (EU) 2021/241. The data will not be used for any other means or for any other purpose that is incompatible with that for which the data is being collected.

In applying for assistance under this scheme, applicants will be giving authorisation to the IB to make enquiries and to carry out the necessary checks with the competent Authorities and Organisations to verify any information submitted in relation to the application.

Beneficiary Undertakings should ensure that they disclose factual and accurate data to the IB. The Beneficiary Undertaking has the right to access all the data relating to the grant issued in its name and may request the rectification of any incorrect data.

## 11 Contact Details

For more information regarding the *Digitalise your SME*, kindly contact the Measures and Support Division.

Address: Measures and Support Division  
The Oaks Business Centre, Block B  
Farsons Street  
Hamrun HMR1325

Telephone Number: 25552635

Email: [msd.eufunds@gov.mt](mailto:msd.eufunds@gov.mt)

Website: <https://fondi.eu/>

## Annex I - Change in Project Manager Form



### Change in Project Manager Form

I, (Name of Authorised Representative), as Authorised Representative on behalf of (Name of Beneficiary) as the Beneficiary, appoint (Name of new Project Manager) holder of ID card No. (ID No.) to the position of Project Manager in the stead of (Name of current Project Manager) for the investment project (Project Reference) effective as of (Date of new appointment).

The new Project Manager holds the position of (Insert Position within Enterprise) within the enterprise and may be contacted on (Insert Phone Number) and (Insert email Address).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Authorised Representative      Signature      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of New Project Manager      Signature      Date



## Annex II - Report s Inventory Template

### Business Enhance Aid Schemes – Report and Inventory

#### General

Grant Reference	
Beneficiary	
Project address	

#### Details of Invoices which include project expenditure

Invoice Ref.	Invoice Date	Supplier	Value of Invoice (incl. VAT)

#### Implementation update

Include an update on the ongoing implementation –

- Which items were procured?
- Any delays foreseen or any issues which are being experienced?
- Is project still on track to be completed as planned?

### List of procured items and location

Name of Eligible Cost Item (as per Annex I of GA)	Item Description <sup>1</sup>	Qty.	Location	Invoice Ref <sup>2</sup>	Serial Number <sup>3</sup>	Stock Code <sup>4</sup>	Photographic evidence <sup>5</sup>	Remarks <sup>6</sup>

I declare that the information provided is correct and all the items are on site and are operational.

\_\_\_\_\_

*Name*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Date*

<sup>1</sup> In this column apart from a clear description of the item include the following:

- In case of a number of similar items, then include each batch in one line;
- If applicable, include the warranty reference/s of the item/s being listed.

<sup>2</sup> Where any item or similar items have been paid through more than one invoice, include the reference of all invoices where that item/s feature.

<sup>3</sup> The Serial Code is the unique identifier assigned to each individual item. In case of similar items, include the serial code for each item. Where an item does not have a serial number, then indicate "N/A – no serial number available" in the Serial Number column. In such cases, another identifier could be provided where possible, such as a model number, asset tag number, stock code, warranty reference, or another description that clearly identifies the item.

<sup>4</sup> The Stock Code is an identifier assigned to product types or categories, therefore similar batch of items shall have the same stock code.

<sup>5</sup> Include a clear picture of the item, another one of its serial or stock code (which needs to be clearly readable), and in case of a similar batch a clear picture of the whole batch. If space is limited, include the pictures as attachments and identify in the space provided a clear reference to the attached pictures.

<sup>6</sup> The Remarks column may be used to include instances of replacement of damaged items or to provide explanations regarding missing serial numbers and other matters.

## Annex III - Claim for Reimbursement - Documentation

The claim for reimbursement shall be accompanied by those documents identified for each sub-activity as per the respective sub-category in section 6.2:

- [Items under the activity Digital Solutions](#)
- [Items approved under the increased AI Threshold](#)
- [Purchasing of Subscription-based Software](#)

together with the following documents:

- Claim for Reimbursement
- Checklist Annexed to Claim for Reimbursement
- [Beneficiary Financial Identification Form](#) (*only to be submitted with the first advance payment or first claim for reimbursement, as long as same account details are retained*)
- [Supplier Detail Form](#) (*in those cases where bank account details of supplier are not included in the invoice*)
- Post-digitalisation project Digital Intensity Assessment issued by the [Malta Digital Innovation Authority](#)<sup>47</sup> done together with MDIA's [Digital Maturity Assessment](#), as per [Annex VI](#) (*only to be submitted with the final claim for reimbursement and dated prior to the final claim for reimbursement*)
- Copy of [Report C Inventory](#) (*as per provided template*)
- Copy of Separate Ledger Account or Record showing full details of expenditure (*as per [Section 7.2](#)*)
- Copy of warranties (*if applicable*)
- Photographic Evidence (of procured items; serial numbers and publicity)
- Compliance Certificate/s issued by the Malta Tax and Customs Administration (MTCA) covering Income Tax, VAT and Final Settlement and of Social Security Contributions Compliance Certificates **issued not earlier than one month from the date** when respective claim for reimbursement is presented to the IB.
- Right of Use of Premises (leasing agreement, contract or similar)
- Class of Use permit (through Planning Authority permit)
- Statement signed by Authorized Representative *specifying the following:*
  - (i) The expenditure to implement the action was actually incurred by the Undertaking and was not reimbursed or may be recoverable through other sources;
  - (ii) The expenditure satisfies the conditions that are outlined in the Grant Agreement;
  - (iii) The output (investment) is in place and set in operation within the duration of the project period being the timeline outlined in the Grant Agreement;

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<sup>47</sup> An appointment can be set with the Malta Digital Innovation Authority by sending an email on [funding.mdia@mdia.gov.mt](mailto:funding.mdia@mdia.gov.mt)

- (iv) The Beneficiary has ensured that any rules governing accumulation of aid have been respected.

The IB may request further documentation where and as necessary and the reimbursement request will only be processed once the IB is satisfied that the reimbursement criteria have been met.



## Annex V - Beneficiary Financial Identification Form



**Financial Identification Form – EU Funds**  
**Formola ta' Identifikazzjoni – Fondi tal-UE**  
 EU Payments Unit



<b>Part I</b>	Name and Surname or Enterprise/Entity Name / Isem u Kunjom jew Isem I-Intrapriża/Entità	
	Company Registration Number and Name (if applicable) / Numru ta Registrazzjoni Tal-Kumpanija u Isem [jekk applikabbli]	
	Identification Number (ID or Passport) / Numru ta' Identifikazzjoni (ID jew Passaport)	
	Address / Indirizz	
	Town or City / Raġal jew Belt	Post Code / Kodiċi Postali
	Country / Pajjż	Telephone Number or Mobile Number / Numru tat-Telefown jew Numru tal-Mowbajl
	VAT Reg. Number / Numru tar-Registrazzjoni tal-VAT	Tax Identification Number (if applicable) / Numru ta Identifikazzjoni Fiskali [jekk applikabbli]
	Contact Person / Isem tal-Persuna li magħha għandu jsir kuntatt	
	e-mail Address [generic] / Indirizz Elettroniku [ġeneriku]	
	<b>Part II</b>	Bank Account Holder / Isem tad-Detentur tal-Kont tal-Bank
Bank Name / Isem tal-Bank Kummerċjali		
Branch Address / Indirizz tal-Ferġha tal-Bank Kummerċjali		
Town/City and Post Code / Raġal /Belt u Kodiċi Postali		
Country / Pajjż		
International Bank Account Number (IBAN) [compulsory] / Numru Internazzjonali tal-Kont Bankarju (IBAN) [obbligatorju]		
Bank Identifier Code (BIC) / Kodiċi ta' Identifikazzjoni tal-Bank (BIC)		

**Part III** I the undersigned declare that all information filled herein and conferred to you is to the best of my knowledge and belief true, correct and complete. I understand and am fully aware that falsification of any information may jeopardise the validity of the payment issued thereon. I further declare that I have read and understood the details given on pages 2/3 of this form, and unless otherwise directed, the above information may be used for future EU related payments.

Jien, hawn taht iffirmat, niddikjara li l-informazzjoni kollha mimmija hawn fuq u mogħtija, hija, sa fejn naf jien, vera, korretta u sħiħa. Jiena nifhem, u jiena konxju, illi falsifikazzjoni ta' kwalunkwe tip ta' informazzjoni tista tipperikola l-validità ta' pagamenti maħruga fuq din l-informazzjoni. Niddikjara wkoll illi jiena qrajt u fihim id-dettalji mogħtija fit-tieni/tielet pagna ta' din il-formola, u sakemm ma jkunx indikat mod ieħor, l-informazzjoni ta' hawn fuq tista' tintuza għal pagamenti futuri relatati mal-Fondi tal-UE.

Signature of Account Holder / Firma tad-Detentur tal-Kont ..... Date / Data .....  
 [compulsory / obbligatorju]

## Annex VI - Digital Intensity Assessment (*Post-Digitalisation Project*)

### 1. Post Digitalisation Evaluation by MDIA

- *Re-evaluation against Digital Intensity Criteria* including current adoption status and extent of use as follows:

Digital Technology	Status (Yes/No)	Details
1) Internet for at least 50% of employees		Percentage of employees and type of connection
2) Recourse to ICT Specialists		Number of specialists or outsourced services
3) Fast Broadband (30Mbps or above)		Type of connection and speed details
4) Mobile internet devices for at least 20% of people employed		Percentage of employees and type of mobile internet device provided by employer
5) A webpage or homepage		URL of webpage/homepage
6) A website with sophisticated functions		URL including the list of sophisticated functions
7) Social Media		URL of Social Media pages
8) Paying to advertise on Internet		Type of Internet advertisements
9) Buying medium-high cloud computing services		Type of cloud computing services
10) Sending e-invoices suitable for automated processing		Type of e-invoicing
11) e-Commerce web sales accounting for at least 1% of total turnover		Amount web-sales and percentage of total turnover
12) Business-to-consumer (B2C) web sales of over 10% of total web sales		Amount of B2C web sales and percentage of total web sales

- Confirmation that the digital technologies that were in place prior to the project are still in place
- Documentary evidence of the digital technologies met throughout the project.
- Confirmation that any Cyber Security, Internet of Things (IOT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data analysis, Cloud Computing or Quantum Technology items identified in the Grant Agreement have been completed in line with Malta's Digital Decade Strategic Roadmap 2023 - 2030 targets.

### 2. Digital Intensity Assessment

- *Comparison Table - Pre vs Post Digitalisation Results*

Digital Intensity Criteria	Before Project	After Project	Change
Number of Technologies met			

## Annex VII - Overview of Eligible Actions that qualify for the increased AI threshold

### 1. AI Solution Development s Customisation

Eligible when centred on adapting and configuring existing AI technologies, not inventing new models or conducting any RCD

- Tailoring AI models to the SME's specific workflows or sector requirements.
- Developing custom features, connectors, or interfaces using existing AI engines.
- Engineering work to configure and fine-tune AI behaviour within recognised technical boundaries.
- Creation of sector-specific prompt libraries, rule sets, or knowledge bases.
- Staff<sup>48</sup> or contractor costs directly linked to:
  - Curating and preparing datasets used by the AI.
  - Creating structured content and, or input data, inc. images for AI ingestion.
  - Supervising or validating AI training to ensure accuracy, compliance, and proper domain alignment.

### 2. AI-Based Digital Tools s Platforms

Acquisition or activation of AI-powered systems to be deployed within the SME.

- AI modules, LLM-based assistants, predictive analytics tools or recommendation engines.
- Vision, voice, or NLP platforms required to run the proposed solution.
- Subscription-based AI platforms (up to 2 years).
- API usage plans and/or consumption or usage-based models essential for operating the selected AI module (up to 2 years)<sup>49</sup>.
- Software tools required to build, manage or feed the data pipelines supporting the AI solution.

### 3. Custom Software Modules Integrated With AI

Custom development required to embed AI within enterprise systems<sup>50</sup>.

- Middleware or microservices connecting AI models to ERP/CRM/POS and other core systems.
- Dashboards, decision-support interfaces, and other internal application layers.
- Data-transformation scripts and automation routines.
- UX and UI components required to deliver AI-powered products or outputs.

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<sup>48</sup> In line with Section 2.3.2

<sup>49</sup> Based on transparent cost estimates provided in the scoping exercise and reimbursed by extrapolating the lowest monthly consumption evidenced in the submitted invoices at claim for reimbursement over a 24-month period or the Grant Agreement value, whichever is the lowest. Open-ended or indeterminate consumption commitments cannot be supported, as grant amounts must be clearly established in advance in line with procurement, audit and financial control requirements.

<sup>50</sup> For the purposes of the scheme, enterprise systems refer to business systems used to support core operational processes, including but not limited to ERP, CRM, finance, HR, supply chain, or similar systems, regardless of their scale or complexity.

- Internal personnel costs eligible only when:
- Time-bound and linked directly to the integration activity.
- Clearly attributable to the documented development tasks.
- Do not constitute experimental RCD or model invention.

## 4. Hardware Required for AI Operations

Eligible only when essential for running or deploying the AI solution.

- GPU-enabled servers, workstations or other processing devices.
- Edge devices or IoT sensors required to feed data into the AI.
- Networking equipment, including routers, switches and access points.
- Laptops or tablets only when directly required for implementing or operating the AI solution.

## 5. Cloud, Compute s Data Infrastructure

Infrastructure required for hosting, operating, or supporting the AI system.

- Cloud compute services for non-experimental model execution.
- Storage systems for datasets, logs and model outputs.
- Virtual machines, containers and orchestration environments.
- Data warehouses or data lakes forming part of the AI solution.
- Backup, security, resilience and compliance configurations tied to AI deployment.
- Data residency, partitioning and secure-storage configurations required by the AI solution.

## 6. Cybersecurity Measures Supporting the AI System

Security components required to ensure safe, secure and compliant operation of the AI solution.

- AI-specific monitoring tools (e.g., anomaly detection, authentication layers).
- Endpoint protection and identity-management systems.
- Hardening activities for the AI hosting environment.
- Secure API gateways and encryption technologies protecting data flows.
- Isolated or sandboxed execution environments for AI components to limit system exposure.
- Model-security controls (e.g., access policies, model signing/attestation, integrity verification).
- Runtime protections to prevent data exfiltration or system-level actions triggered via prompt manipulation.
- Data segregation and least-privilege access patterns to protect sensitive corpora used by the AI.
- Protections against model/IP theft (e.g., encrypted artefacts, watermarking, egress controls, anomaly alerts).

## 7. Data Collection, Preparation s Deployment Support

Activities required to prepare the AI system for real-world use, without constituting RCD.

- Data cleaning, structuring, annotation and taxonomy creation.
- Migration of legacy data essential for AI functionality.
- Testing for accuracy, bias mitigation and output alignment (non-experimental).
- Grounding and data-scoping configurations (retrieval rules, redaction, allow/deny lists) ensuring safe model context.
- User Acceptance Testing (UAT) and operational scenario testing.
- Staff Costs<sup>51</sup>, limited to:
  - Training the AI with sector-specific knowledge (e.g., legal, financial, medical).
  - Validating and correcting AI outputs during deployment.
  - Creating or maintaining content corpora that feed the AI model.

## 8. Integration with Enterprise Systems<sup>52</sup>

Activities required to ensure the AI solution is fully operational and embedded within the SME's existing environment.

- Integration with ERP, CRM, accounting or production systems.
- Workflow automation linking AI predictions or actions into core business processes.
- API configuration, connectors, authentication and access-control setups.
- Performance monitoring tools and operational dashboards.
- Process optimisation required to embed the AI solution into day-to-day operations.

## G. Supplier Implementation s Configuration Services

External specialist services required for the deployment of the AI solution.

- Supplier installation, configuration and testing.
- Third-party setup of AI modules or cloud environments.
- Documentation, operational manuals and knowledge transfer.
- User training directly related to the deployed AI solution, eligible only when delivered by the same supplier providing the item or solution, and strictly limited to training necessary for effective use, operation and compliance.

## 10. AI Assurance s Responsible Use Controls

Controls and mechanisms that ensure safe, compliant, and responsible operation of the AI system.

- Tools and processes for monitoring accuracy, unintended behaviours, model drift and biased outputs during operation.
- Guardrails or filtering mechanisms ensuring compliant and safe use of AI systems.
- Controls to detect and prevent prompt-injection or jailbreak attempts (e.g., input validation, policy guardrails).
- Isolated or sandboxed execution environments for testing prompts, updates and guardrails prior to production.

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<sup>51</sup> As identified in Section 2.3.2

<sup>52</sup> For the purposes of the scheme, enterprise systems refer to business systems used to support core operational processes, including but not limited to ERP, CRM, finance, HR, supply chain, or similar systems, regardless of their scale or complexity.

- Model-security protections against unauthorised access or model theft (e.g., integrity checks, access policies).
- Data-scoping and positioning controls defining what information the AI can or cannot access or surface.
- Mechanisms to detect and prevent data leakage, including unintended disclosure of sensitive or proprietary information.
- Controls to prevent the generation of harmful or misleading synthetic data, including output-validation and safe-generation filters.

