

# **EIC Accelerator 2025 Short Application Process Guide**

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# Table of Contents

- Overview
- Purpose of the EIC Accelerator
- Who Can Apply
- Key Benefits and Funding
- Step-by-Step Guide
- Eligibility Check
- Application Platform and Account Setup
- Prepare Required Documents and Application Format
- Video Pitch Submission
- Business Plan & Slide Deck Preparation
- Key Deadlines and Submission Process
- Evaluation Criteria
- Short Proposal Evaluation
- Full Proposal Evaluation
- Jury Interview (Step 3)
- Key Success Factors (What Makes a Strong Application)
- Common Reasons for Rejection
- Submission Tips
- Best Practices for a Successful Application
- Common Mistakes to Avoid
- Additional Resources and Support

## Overview

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### Purpose of the EIC Accelerator

The EIC Accelerator is a flagship EU funding program under Horizon Europe designed to help innovative startups and SMEs develop and scale up high-impact innovations. It targets breakthrough products, services, or business models that could create new markets or disrupt existing ones, and which are too risky for private investors alone (EIC Accelerator - European Commission) (Tips for applicants - EIC Accelerator - European Commission). Essentially, the program looks for game-changing innovations (typically at Technology Readiness Level 6-8) with the potential for international growth and positive societal impact.

### Who Can Apply

The program is open to single startups and small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from EU Member States or Horizon Europe associated countries. It also welcomes individuals or teams planning to form an SME (a company must be established by the time of grant signing). Small mid-cap companies (up to 499 employees) are eligible for the investment component\* (equity) and not for grants. The program welcomes applications from diverse founders – for example, it encourages diverse teams – as long as they meet the eligibility criteria. All applicants must be based in an EU or associated country (or willing to relocate there before the full application stage) (EIC Accelerator - new template - European Commission).

### Key Benefits and Funding

Selected companies can receive a combination of grant and equity funding (blended finance) for their innovation's development and market launch. The grant component can provide up to €2.5 million (typically as a lump sum) to cover up to 70% of eligible project costs for R&D, product validation, etc., over a project of up to ~24 months. In addition, the investment component (through the EIC Fund) can range from €0.5 million to €10 million (or more in specific cases) to scale up the venture. Companies may apply for grant-only, equity-only, or blended finance depending on their needs (e.g., small mid-caps can only request equity). Beyond funding, EIC Accelerator beneficiaries get access to Business Acceleration Services – mentoring, coaching, networking opportunities, and connections to corporates – to boost their growth. This combination of substantial funding and support is aimed at helping startups overcome the funding gap for high-risk innovation and achieve rapid scale-up.

## Step-by-Step Guide

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### Eligibility Check

Before preparing an application, ensure your venture is eligible for EIC Accelerator funding. Review the criteria for applicants – you must be a single SME or startup (or planning to establish one) in an EU or associated country, or a small mid-cap seeking scale-up investment. Make sure your project's technology is sufficiently advanced (completed proof of concept/prototype, roughly TRL 5/6 or higher) and that you have a high-risk, high-potential innovation (the EIC is not interested in minor improvements or off-the-shelf projects). If you meet these criteria, the first step is to register your organization on the European Commission's Funding & Tenders Portal. Create an EU Login account and obtain a Participant Identification Code (PIC) for your company, as portal registration is required to access the EIC application system. It's also wise to read the EIC Work Programme 2025 and Guides for Applicants for any specific rules (e.g., resubmission limits or national eligibility nuances). Essentially, do your homework on eligibility and gather any needed registrations before moving forward.

### Application Platform and Account Setup

The EIC uses an online application platform for submitting your proposal. Short proposals (Step 1) are submitted via a dedicated EIC online platform accessible through the EU Funding & Tenders Portal. Once your company is registered, log in to the portal and find the EIC Accelerator call (either the Open call or a specific Challenge if your project fits one). Clicking "Apply" will direct you to the short application platform (as of mid-2023, the EIC introduced a new IT platform for submissions). Set up your account profile and fill in the administrative details required (such as your company information, contact details, and basic project info). The platform will provide the templates and sections you need for the short application. Ensure to complete the preliminary **eligibility check** (EIC Accelerator application platform Frequently Asked Questions - European Commission) on the platform – for example, confirming your SME status and that you are requesting an eligible funding amount. The system may also ask a few questions to ensure you're applying to the right program. Once your account is set up and you've selected the relevant call (2025 EIC Accelerator Open or a specific Challenge), you can begin entering your proposal information and uploading documents.

Tip: Ensure you have a stable internet connection and use a supported browser, as you'll be uploading a video and PDF files. Save your work frequently on the platform. If you need help, the portal provides an online manual and you can reach out to the EIC support team or your National Contact Point for guidance.

## Prepare Required Documents and Application Format

The short application has three key components you must prepare: an online form, a pitch deck, and a video.

### 1. Online Proposal Form:

Fill out the short proposal form on the platform – this is a questionnaire (about 5 pages of content, though in 2024/25 it can be longer) covering the essentials of your project. The form will prompt you to summarize your innovation, market opportunity, and team. Be concise and address the questions directly – for example, describe what your product/technology is, the problem it solves, why it's innovative, the size of the market and growth potential, your business model, and who is involved. Note that a full detailed business plan is not required at this stage; focus on the key points that make your idea exciting and viable.

*(Note: Financial forecasts and detailed cost breakdowns are not required in the short application, but you should know roughly how much funding you'll request and for what.)*

### 2. Pitch Deck:

Prepare a pitch deck (PowerPoint or PDF) of up to 10 slides to support your application. This slide deck should cover the core elements of your venture – typically: the problem/need, your solution (product/service and how it's different), market overview, your business model or how you'll make money, competition and your unique advantage, go-to-market or commercialization plan, traction or milestones achieved so far, financing or investment needed, and the team behind the project. The platform will provide a template or at least a suggested outline. Keep the slides visual and to-the-point, as evaluators will review this deck as a summary of your business case.

### 3. Video Pitch:

Create a video pitch of up to 3 minutes. In the video, the core members of your team (up to 3 people) should introduce themselves and passionately explain your innovation and motivation. This is essentially you “pitching” your project as if to investors – cover the highlights of what makes your innovation special, what problem it solves, how big the opportunity is, and why you need EIC funding (don't forget the ask). Ensure the video is clear, well-lit, and that the audio quality is good – evaluators will watch this, so aim to make a strong impression.

Once these components are ready, you will upload the pitch deck PDF and video file (or link) to the application platform and finalize the form. The platform may run automatic checks (like file format, size limits – e.g., video must typically be under 100 MB). Double-check that all three pieces (form, deck, video) are properly attached and formatted as required, because missing any of them could make your application inadmissible.

## Video Pitch Submission

The video deserves special attention as it's a unique part of the EIC Accelerator short application. After preparing your 2–3 minute pitch video, you will need to submit it through the online platform along with your form and slides. The platform may ask you to upload the video file or provide a link (in some cases, a YouTube or Vimeo private link; check the latest instructions). Ensure the file or link is accessible and not password-protected so evaluators can easily view it.

In your video, focus on storytelling and clarity: introduce your company and team, highlight the customer problem and how your innovation solves it, and convey enthusiasm for your project. The EIC specifically asks that the core team members appear in the video to provide the motivation for the proposal. This means evaluators want to see the people behind the innovation and understand why you are driven to make it succeed. It's okay if the video is simple – you speaking to the camera with maybe a prototype demo or graphics – as long as it's engaging. Avoid overly technical details; instead, communicate impact and vision. Practice your pitch to keep it within the time limit (going over 3 minutes might risk your video not being reviewed fully). Once you're satisfied, upload the video and test it (many platforms allow a preview) to ensure it plays correctly.

Pro Tip: Follow any specific guidelines the EIC provides for the video – for example, accepted formats (MP4 is usually safe), resolution, and whether to include subtitles. While not mandatory, adding English subtitles can help ensure evaluators understand everything, especially if accents or audio quality could be an issue. A compelling video pitch can strongly reinforce your written application by putting a “face” to the project and demonstrating your commitment.

## Business Plan & Slide Deck Preparation

Even though the short application doesn't require a full business plan document, you should approach it like a mini business plan. The evaluators expect a business-oriented proposal rather than a purely scientific/technical one. This means your writing and your pitch deck should clearly address how the innovation will succeed in the market, how you will deploy the product, and how the business will grow.

When preparing the pitch deck, ensure it is well-structured and persuasive. Include all relevant information an investor would want to see: the market size and opportunity, your value proposition and USP (Unique Selling Proposition) compared to existing solutions, evidence of customer interest or traction (if any), and a credible plan to commercialize the innovation. Quantify things where possible – e.g., “Our target market is worth €5 billion, growing 10% annually. We project reaching €50M revenue in 5 years with this funding.” – to substantiate your claims.

Make sure competitive analysis is included; many proposals fail because they don't convincingly explain how their idea is better than the competition or alternative solutions. If you have patents or unique technology in written form, keep your answers clear and straightforward. Avoid jargon and explain any technical aspects in layman's terms so that non-specialist evaluators can understand you. Demonstrate the market need (why customers would buy your product) and how the EIC funding will be transformative for your company. If certain elements (like detailed financials or letters from customers) are reserved for the full proposal, you can still mention that you have promising data or partnerships, making a strong case that your project is viable.

Essentially, use the short application to paint a compelling picture of a high-growth business. A good strategy is to align your content with the evaluation criteria (excellence, impact, implementation – explained below) to ensure you cover everything evaluators are looking for. Before submitting, have someone else review your materials – ideally a colleague or advisor not deeply familiar with the project – to see if your value proposition is coming across clearly. Typos or inconsistencies can distract from your message, so proofread everything.

## Key Deadlines and Submission Process

One advantage of the EIC Accelerator short application is that it can be submitted at any time – there are no fixed cut-off deadlines for Step 1. The call is open on a rolling basis throughout 2025. Once you have your materials ready, you can hit “Submit” on the platform whenever you’re confident in your application. However, evaluation of short proposals is batch processed: applications are collected and evaluated in batches. For instance, according to the 2025 work programme, all short proposals submitted are batched for evaluation on the first Tuesday of every month at 10:00 AM CET. This means, for example, if you submit just after a cut-off, your proposal will wait a few weeks until the next batch. Plan your submission timing accordingly (but don’t stress too much on the exact day – since it’s rolling, missing one batch just means waiting for the next).

After the batch evaluation, you will typically receive the result in about 4 to 6 weeks. The evaluation result will tell you whether your short proposal met the criteria and is successful (a “GO” decision) or not (“NO GO”). You will receive feedback from the evaluators in either case.

If your short application is successful, you will be invited to prepare a full proposal (Step 2). You then have up to 12 months from the date of the short proposal result to submit your full proposal. EIC Accelerator full proposals can only be submitted on specific cut-off dates. In 2025, there are *two cut-off deadlines* (and 1 October 2025). You can choose whichever cut-off gives you enough time to develop a strong full application (and you may also use EIC-provided coaching before the full submission). Keep in mind that the full proposal must be submitted by 17:00 Brussels time on the cut-off date (late submissions miss the round).

If you are not successful at the short proposal stage, you typically can revise your application according to any rules on re-submission limits. (The EIC has a “three strikes” rule: if you are rejected three times at any stage – short, full, or interview – you become ineligible for the program during that period.) Therefore, use your attempts wisely and incorporate evaluator feedback before re-submitting.

In summary, for Step 1 submit anytime, then for Step 2, the 2025 deadlines are (e.g., March 12 and October 1). If you pass Step 2, the Step 3 interviews are usually scheduled a couple of months after the cut-off (e.g., for the March cut-off, interviews might be in June). All these dates and timelines are published in the EIC Work Programme and on the EIC website, so stay up-to-date with official sources for any changes. Finally, when you are ready to submit your short application, do a final check that **all information is complete and correct** (What You Need To Know: EIC Accelerator Grant). Incomplete proposals or missing documents can be deemed ineligible without review. Once submitted, congratulate yourself – applying to such a competitive program is a big effort – and be patient during the evaluation period. You will receive an email notification when results are out, and you can also check the portal for the status.

Good luck!



## Evaluation Criteria

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The EIC Accelerator uses a three-step evaluation process:

1. Remote expert evaluation of the short proposal.
2. Remote expert evaluation of the full proposal (for those invited).
3. Face-to-face jury interview for finalists.

At each stage, you must succeed to move to the next.

### Short Proposal Evaluation

For the short proposal, your submission is evaluated remotely by four independent expert evaluators with different profiles (e.g., technical, business, finance). They assess your short application against key award criteria set by the EIC. Notably, each evaluator looks at three main areas:

- **Excellence:** Is the innovation high-impact and novel? Evaluators examine the breakthrough nature of your product/technology, whether the timing is right (i.e., why now, and has the idea reached a sufficient maturity like TRL ~5/6). You need to show that your concept is not just an incremental improvement but could create new markets or revolutionize existing ones. Evidence of a working prototype or validated proof of concept is important to demonstrate technological excellence (the EIC expects at least lab validation to be done). In addition, elements such as trade secrets and unique know-how also fall under excellence – show you have an advantage that others find hard to copy.

- **Impact:** Is there large market potential and scale-up opportunity? Evaluators consider the likely impact of your innovation in terms of market size, revenue generation, job creation, and broader societal or environmental effects. Demonstrate a clear understanding of your target market and how your solution addresses a real need. Quantify the market and outline your commercialization strategy. High impact also means the project could significantly scale up your company – the EIC wants to back ventures that can grow internationally and become market leaders. Clearly articulate any positive spill-over effects, such as contributing to EU strategic goals or sustainability. If your project is aligned with an EIC Challenge, additional specific metrics may apply. Importantly, EIC-funded projects should have a European or global scope – if your plan only targets a local or national market, it's unlikely to be scored well.

- **Implementation and Need for EU Support:** Is the project challenging and is your team capable of delivering it? Evaluators examine how you plan to execute the project and whether you have identified and mitigated major risks. They assess the credibility of your team by evaluating whether you have the necessary technical and business expertise, or if you have plans to fill any gaps. Explain the rationale behind needing EIC funding – why do you require public funding, and why now? The EIC Accelerator is meant for projects that cannot easily find sufficient private investment due to high risk. Outline the intended use of the funding (e.g., for technical development to reach market-readiness) and provide a realistic project timeline and milestones.

Each of the four evaluators will review your short proposal and assign a verdict of either “GO” or “NO GO” for your application, based on the above criteria. At least 3 out of 4 experts must give a “GO” for your proposal to be successful. If fewer than 3 evaluators recommend “GO” (i.e., if 2, 1 or 0 do), then your proposal is rejected at this stage. Along with the decision, you will receive an Evaluation Summary Report with feedback comments from the experts, which can help you understand the strengths and weaknesses of your application.

## **Full Proposal Evaluation**

For the full proposal (Step 2), the evaluation criteria are essentially the same three (Excellence, Impact, Implementation), but assessed in much greater depth. Full proposals are evaluated by a panel of three expert evaluators (remotely). They will score each criterion and provide detailed comments. The threshold for passing the full proposal stage is even higher: ideally, all three evaluators need to give a “GO” to invite you to the final interview. If only 2 out of 3 give a “GO,” the evaluators will hold a consensus discussion to decide if the proposal can pass, but any single NO GO can be enough to stop a proposal.

This highly competitive evaluation ensures that only the most convincing proposals advance.

## **Jury Interview (Step 3)**

If your application reaches the final stage, you will be invited to a jury interview. The interview panel, typically comprising investors, entrepreneurs, and technical experts, will review your full proposal and the evaluators’ reports. You will be asked to give a pitch presentation (about 10 minutes) followed by a Q&A session (around 30-35 minutes). The jury will evaluate your ability to defend the project convincingly and recommend it for funding. Their decision is the final step – if the jury is convinced, you’ll be selected for funding (grant and/or equity, as applicable). If not, your application will be rejected.

The jury applies the same broad criteria and is particularly focused on your personal ability to deliver the project and the overall credibility of the venture. Preparation is crucial, as the interview is a key moment to showcase your project’s potential.

## Key Success Factors (What Makes a Strong Application)

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Successful EIC Accelerator applications typically demonstrate the following qualities:

- **Demonstrating a Real Breakthrough:**

Your innovation should be novel and disruptive, not merely an incremental improvement. Clearly articulate your unique selling point (USP) and use data or comparisons (e.g., “10× faster than existing technology” or “first-ever solution to...”) to illustrate its magnitude. Specify the current development stage (TRL) to show progress beyond a basic prototype or pilot.

- **Clear Market Need and Big Opportunity:**

Articulate the problem or need in the market that your innovation addresses. Support your claims with evidence such as market research, customer feedback, or industry reports. Provide quantifiable data about the market size and growth potential, and outline your commercialization strategy. Mention any early traction (e.g., pilot users, letters of intent) to validate market demand. Highlight the European/global dimension of your plan.

- **Strong, Committed Team:**

Convince evaluators that your team is capable of executing the project. Emphasize the track record, expertise, and commitment of key team members. Mention any advisors, mentors, or partners that strengthen your team’s capabilities. A well-rounded team covering both technical and commercial aspects is crucial.

- **Feasible Plan and Risk Mitigation:**

Present a realistic project plan with clear milestones for the next 1-2 years. Identify potential risks – technical, market, regulatory, etc. – and explain how you plan to mitigate them. A credible implementation plan boosts confidence in your ability to manage the project and deliver results.

- **Justification for EIC Funding (“EU Added Value”):**

Clearly explain why you require public funding and how the project would stall or take longer without EIC support. Detail why traditional private investors might not be willing to finance the project due to its high risk. Connect your project to broader EU priorities or demonstrate how it strengthens the European innovation ecosystem.

# Common Reasons for Rejection

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Competition for the EIC Accelerator is fierce, and proposals are frequently rejected for one or more of the following reasons:

**1. Not a True Breakthrough or “Not the Right Fit”:**

Proposals may be rejected if evaluators feel the innovation is merely incremental or not aligned with the high-risk, high-impact vision of the EIC Accelerator.

**2. Unclear or Incomplete Proposal:**

Lack of clarity and detail in explaining the technology, business model, or value proposition can lead evaluators to misconstrue the potential of the project. Missing required information or failing to adhere to the application format is a red flag.

**3. Lack of Proof or Evidence:**

Bold claims need to be supported by data. Proposals that do not provide sufficient evidence of functionality (e.g., prototype, test results) or market validation will be seen as speculative.

**4. Weak Market or Commercialization Section:**

Underestimating competitors or failing to provide a realistic market analysis and commercialization strategy can significantly lower the proposal’s impact score.

**5. Team Not Convincing:**

Evaluators look for teams with the necessary expertise and commitment. A team lacking coherent experience or a clear plan to address skill gaps can lead to rejection.

**6. Technology Readiness or Development Gap:**

Proposals that appear too early-stage (e.g., TRL 3 or 4) without sufficient validation of the core technology may be deemed unprepared for commercial acceleration.

**7. Inadequate Justification for EU Funding:**

If the proposal does not convincingly demonstrate why public funding is needed – especially if the project appears fundable by private investors – it may be rejected.

**8. Errors or Non-Compliance with Guidelines:**

Non-compliance with submission guidelines, such as missing sections, exceeding page or time limits, or incorrect file formats, can result in the proposal being deemed inadmissible or scoring poorly.

Understanding these pitfalls can help you avoid them. Use evaluator feedback from previous applications to improve your proposal before resubmission.

## Submission Tips

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### Best Practices for a Successful Application

- **Align with EIC Objectives and Criteria:**

Ensure your project clearly fits the EIC Accelerator's vision by structuring your application around the excellence, impact, and implementation criteria.

- **Tell a Compelling Story:**

Frame the problem and opportunity in an engaging narrative that is easy to understand. Support your story with data and clear logical connections (problem → solution → market → funding need).

- **Be Concise and Concrete:**

Use simple, direct language and avoid unnecessary jargon. Provide concrete evidence such as numbers, comparisons, and test results. Adhere strictly to length limits to demonstrate your ability to communicate effectively within constraints.

- **Emphasize Your Unique Selling Proposition:**

Clearly highlight what sets your innovation apart through features like novel technology, patent protection, or unique business models. Include a dedicated section on "Competition" if possible.

- **Provide Credible Market and Financial Projections:**

Include realistic projections of business growth—e.g., expected revenue or user base—and justify these figures with market data. Clearly outline your funding ask and the corresponding outcomes.

- **Highlight the Team's Strengths:**

Introduce key team members, emphasizing relevant experience and past successes. Include information about advisors or partners that enhance your team's capabilities.

- **Demonstrate European Dimension and Added Value:**

Explain how your project benefits Europe—through job creation, reducing dependencies, or aligning with EU priorities (e.g., the Green Deal or Digital goals). If relevant, mention plans for cross-border collaboration.

- **Use Available Support and Feedback:**

Leverage resources like National Contact Points (NCPs), webinars, and peer reviews. Incorporate feedback from previous submissions to strengthen your proposal.

- **Start Early and Plan Your Time:**

Begin your application well in advance. Ensure you have ample time for drafting, external reviews, and addressing any technical issues, such as video production or slide formatting.

## Common Mistakes to Avoid

- **Writing a Research Proposal Instead of a Business Proposal:**

Focus too much on R&D details rather than the market potential and business strategy.

- **Ignoring the Evaluation Criteria Structure:**

Neglecting any one of the three key criteria (excellence, impact, implementation) can adversely affect your score. Ensure balanced coverage of all areas.

- **Lack of Specificity and Evidence:**

Avoid vague statements without backing them up with data or specific examples. Detailed figures and market research strengthen your case.

- **Overlooking Competition or Overhyping Uniqueness:**

Acknowledge competitors and detail your competitive edge rather than claiming no competition exists. Avoid excessive superlatives without proof.

- **Poor Pitch Deck Design:**

Ensure slides are visually appealing and easy to read. Avoid overcrowded text and maintain consistency with the written proposal.

- **Low-Quality Video or Missing Key Points:**

Treat the video pitch as a vital component. Ensure high-quality audio and visual presentation, and avoid merely repeating information from the written application.

- **Disregarding Format Instructions:**

Strictly adhere to page limits, file format requirements, and other specified guidelines to avoid disqualification.

- **Submitting Without Proofreading or External Review:**

Spelling errors, inconsistent data, and poor formatting can undermine your application's credibility. Have others review your work before submission.

## Additional Resources and Support

- **Official Documentation:**

Refer to the latest EIC Work Programme 2025 and the official Guide for Applicants available on the EIC website or the Funding & Tenders portal for all rules and templates.

- **EIC Website and FAQs:**

The European Innovation Council's website ([eic.ec.europa.eu](http://eic.ec.europa.eu)) contains dedicated pages for the Accelerator, including FAQs and tips for applicants.

- **National Contact Points (NCPs):**

NCPs offer free guidance and can review proposal drafts. Contact your local NCP for personalized assistance.

- **Business Acceleration Services (BAS):**

Successful short proposal applicants gain access to coaching and other support through the EIC's BAS. Attend related events and use available matchmaking services.

- **Consultants and Community:**

Consider engaging with specialized consultants or joining applicant communities (e.g., forums, LinkedIn groups) to exchange experiences and advice.

- **After Submission – What's Next:**

If invited to Step 2 or Step 3, utilize the coaching and feedback provided to refine your full proposal. Practice your pitch extensively for the interview stage.

- **Plan B:**

Given the competitive nature of the EIC Accelerator, also consider other funding opportunities (e.g., Eureka Eurostars, EIC Transition) that might fit your project. Use the application process to refine your overall business strategy, which can be beneficial for other fundraising efforts.

By following this structured guide and utilizing these tips, you'll be well-prepared to navigate the EIC Accelerator 2025 short application process. It's a challenging competition, but a potentially game-changing opportunity for your startup. Good luck with your application, and remember that every part of your submission – from registration to the final pitch – is critical in telling the story of your innovation and its potential for success.

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