

GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINE



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The word "FUNDING" is spelled out in six wooden blocks. The blocks are light-colored wood with dark, bold letters. The blocks are arranged in a staggered, slightly overlapping manner, with the first and last blocks being slightly taller than the middle ones.

INTRODUCTION

Securing funding is one of the challenges faced by universities and professors in fostering entrepreneurship. Access to financial resources can empower students, faculty, and institutions to develop innovative ideas, launch startups, and expand their entrepreneurial initiatives. However, navigating the landscape of funding opportunities can be overwhelming, leading to missed opportunities and underutilized support mechanisms.

This **Grant Application Guideline** aims to help applicants for funding opportunities by providing a roadmap for identifying, applying for, and successfully securing funding for entrepreneurship initiatives. Its purpose is to equip universities and academics with practical knowledge and strategies for effectively accessing financial resources.

The guideline offers an overview of available funding opportunities, eligibility criteria, and best practices for preparing competitive grant proposals. Whether the goal is to support student-led or professor-led startups, develop innovative educational programs, or foster industry collaborations, this tool can help navigate the funding application process. The following sections are presented on this document:

- 1.EU Funding Opportunities**
- 2.Eligibility Criteria**
- 3.Step-by-Step Grant Application Process**
- 4.Tips for Success**

1. EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The European Union offers a wide range of funding opportunities to support entrepreneurship in higher education institutions, aiming to foster innovation, economic growth, and social impact. These funding programs provide financial support for projects that align with EU strategic priorities, such as digitalization, sustainability, and social inclusion.

These funding programs are designed to support different aspects of entrepreneurship, from research and innovation to capacity building and mobility. **Each funding scheme has its objectives, eligibility criteria, and application requirements.** Universities must identify the programs that best align with their institutional goals and entrepreneurship initiatives to increase their chances of success.

Some of the most relevant EU funding programs for entrepreneurship education include:

Horizon Europe

The EU's key funding program for research and innovation, providing financial support for projects that aim to develop groundbreaking solutions, strengthen partnerships between academia and industry, and enhance innovation capacities.

Horizon Europe includes specific calls focused on entrepreneurship, innovation ecosystems, and technology transfer.



Erasmus+

A flagship program that supports education, training, and youth initiatives across Europe. It offers funding for entrepreneurship-related initiatives such as strategic partnerships, capacity-building projects, and mobility programs that allow students and staff to gain entrepreneurial skills through international collaborations and exchanges. Official



Erasmus+



European Innovation Council (EIC)

A funding body that supports high-risk, high-impact innovations through grants, equity investments, and blended finance. The EIC has four different programs to apply for funding: EIC Accelerator, EIC Pathfinder, EIC Transition, and STEP Scale Up. These programs provide funding opportunities for universities, research teams, or individuals to work on disruptive entrepreneurial ventures.



European Social Fund Plus

A program focused on improving employment and educational opportunities, which includes funding for entrepreneurship training, mentoring, and skills development for students and faculty members.



European Regional Development Fund

Supports projects that promote regional economic development and innovation. Universities can apply for funding to develop incubators, entrepreneurial hubs, and collaborative research initiatives that contribute to regional entrepreneurship ecosystems.



EU Funding & Tenders Portal

A platform that provides access to all EU funding programs, including detailed information on available grants, application guidelines, deadlines, and eligibility criteria. This portal serves as a central hub for universities to explore funding opportunities across various sectors, including entrepreneurship, research, and education.

2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To successfully apply for any type funding, it is necessary to understand the eligibility requirements specific to each grant or funding program. Eligibility criteria vary depending on the funding source, the objectives of the program, and the type of project being proposed. Therefore, universities, professors, and students must carefully review these requirements to ensure their proposals align with the necessary qualifications. However, below are some general aspects to consider when evaluating eligibility for grants:

Applicant Type

EU funding opportunities often specify who can apply, which can include universities, research institutions, public bodies, non-profit organizations, and occasionally individuals or consortia. For entrepreneurship-related programs, universities or consortia involving universities and businesses are frequently required.

Project Scope and Objectives

Each funding program has distinct goals and priorities. Ensure that the project aligns with the objectives of the grant. For instance, some programs prioritize fostering innovation, promoting sustainability, or supporting youth entrepreneurship.

Geographic Location

Most EU grants are limited to the EU Member States, associated countries, or specific regions covered by the program. Verify the geographic restrictions of the funding program before applying.

Partnership Requirements

Many EU grants require collaboration between multiple entities from different Member States or associated countries. Building strong partnerships and ensuring balanced representation across regions is often a critical factor in meeting eligibility requirements.



Type of Activities Funded

Funding programs may support specific types of activities, such as capacity building, training, research, technology transfer, prototype development, or dissemination activities. Clearly outline how your project fits within the allowable activities.

Financial Contribution

Many EU grants require co-funding, meaning the applicant must contribute a percentage of the total project budget. Verify the co-funding requirements and ensure you have the necessary resources or financial support from partners.

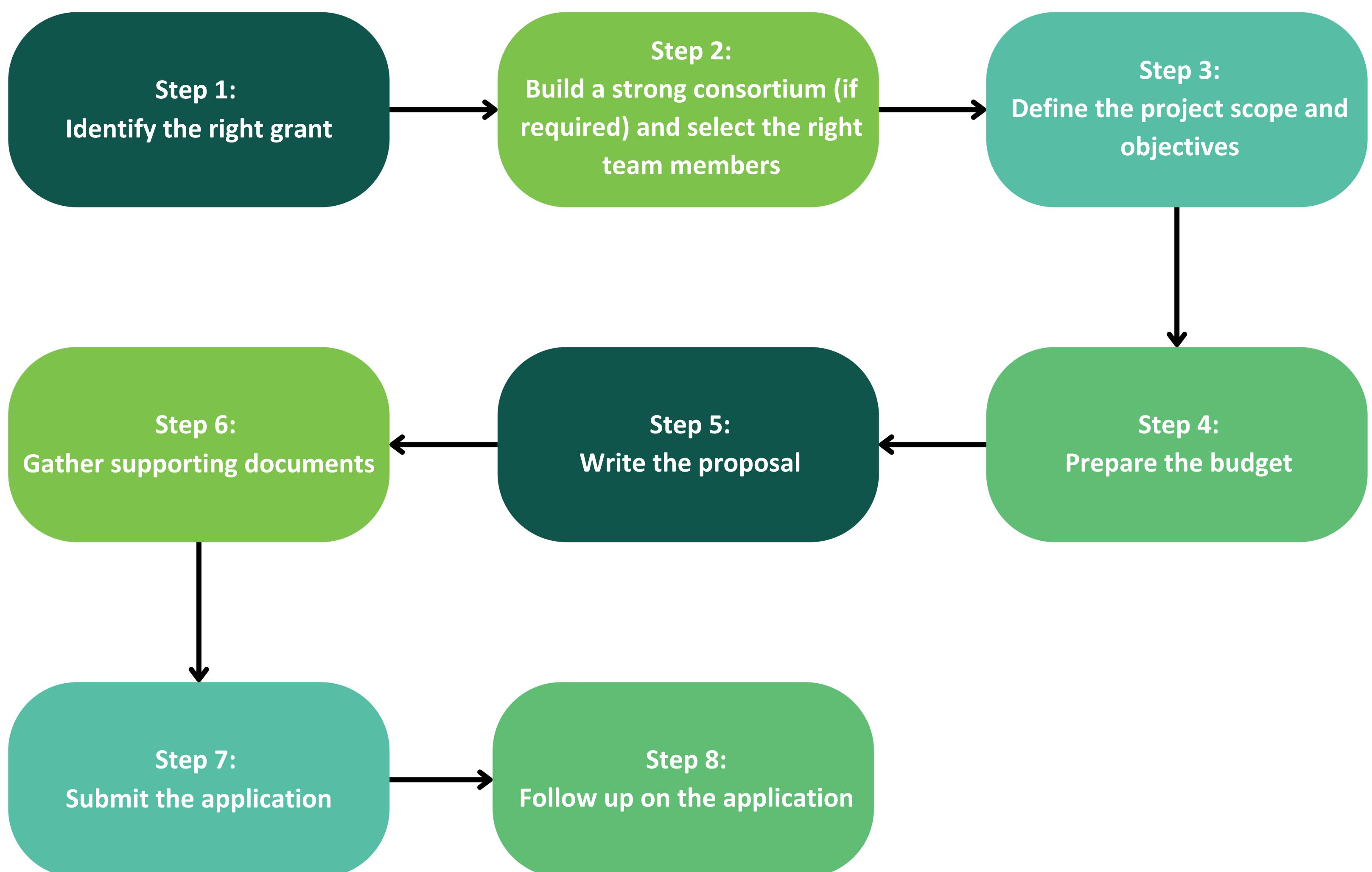
Regulatory Compliance

All applications must adhere to EU regulations, including ethical guidelines, intellectual property rights, and data protection laws. Confirm compliance with these requirements during the project design phase.

Understanding and meeting the eligibility criteria, universities and their teams can strengthen their applications and improve their chances of securing funding. Use the official EU Funding&Tenders Portal to find detailed eligibility guidelines for each program and ensure all requirements are addressed in your application. Always verify the information before starting an application, and if possible, contact people with previous experience on the type of funding you are applying.

3. STEP-BY-STEP GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

Applying for grants can seem as complex, but following a strategy and a clear, detailed process can help to reduce the workload, make the application easier and increase the possibility of success. In this section a general step-by-step guide is presented to help universities, professors, and students navigate the grant application process efficiently and effectively. However, these steps are just a suggestion and can be modified as needed and according to the type of grant you are planning to apply for.



Step 1: Identify the Right Grant

Identifying the appropriate grant is essential to align your project's vision with the funding opportunities available. This process involves understanding the objectives and priorities of different EU funding programs and ensuring your project fits within the specific eligibility criteria. Take time to analyze the calls for proposals and their evaluation criteria to ensure a strong match.

Checklist

- Explore in detail the funding programmes that interest you or check the EU Funding &Tenders Portal for active funding programs and calls.
- Carefully read through the grant's objectives, priorities, and focus areas.
- Confirm eligibility based on your institution type, project scope, and target beneficiaries.
- Take note of submission deadlines, required documents, and evaluation timelines.
- Compare multiple grants to determine which fits best with your project.

Step 2: Build a Strong Consortium (If Required) and Select the Right Team Members

For grants requiring consortiums, the strength of your partnerships can significantly impact your application. A well-balanced team with diverse expertise, institutional support, and a clear collaboration framework is key to success. Even for individual applications, having a robust internal team ensures smooth implementation.

Checklist

- Identify potential partners with expertise relevant to the project's goals.
- Contact organizations, universities, or companies to discuss collaboration opportunities.
- Define roles and responsibilities for each consortium member in the application and sign letters of intent or agreements with partners as required.

Step 3: Define the Project Scope and Objectives

A clearly defined project scope and set of objectives will form the main part of your proposal. This stage ensures that your project aligns with the grant's goals while providing a realistic and measurable plan for implementation. Focus on addressing specific needs or gaps and demonstrate the potential impact of your project.

Checklist

- Write a problem statement that explains the issue your project will address. Make proper literature review and desk research to justify the problem and solution.
- Develop clear, measurable objectives (SMART) that align with the grant's priorities.
- Define the expected outcomes and their impact on target audiences or stakeholders.
- Create a timeline of activities to showcase the project's feasibility.
- Link your project objectives to broader societal, academic, or economic goals.

Step 4: Prepare the Budget

The budget is a critical component of your proposal, as it shows how you plan to allocate resources effectively and ensure value for money. A detailed, transparent, and realistic budget demonstrates your understanding of the project's financial requirements and compliance with funding guidelines.

Checklist

- List all project expenses, such as salaries, travel, equipment, materials, and subcontracting. Justify each of them.
- Calculate costs for each project activity and allocate resources accordingly.
- Ensure the budget complies with the funding program's rules, including cost limits and eligible expenses.
- Include contingency plans for unforeseen costs.

Step 5: Write the Proposal

Your proposal is the main document that determines whether your application will be successful. It needs to be persuasive, well-structured, and aligned with the grant's evaluation criteria. Highlight your project's innovation, feasibility, and impact while adhering to the funder's format and guidelines.

Checklist

- Follow the proposal template provided by the funding program.
- Clearly outline the project's objectives, activities, and expected outcomes.
- Describe how the project addresses the grant's priorities and societal challenges.
- Emphasize your team's expertise and the institution's capacity to manage the project.
- Proofread and review the proposal to ensure clarity, coherence, and compliance.

Step 6: Gather Supporting Documents

Supporting documents provide the evidence needed to validate your application. These may include legal, financial, or institutional documents that establish your credibility and capability to implement the project.

Checklist

- Collect organizational documents (e.g., registration certificates, tax status).
- Prepare letters of support from partners or stakeholders.
- Compile reports or publications that support your project's rationale (if applicable).
- Ensure all documents are formatted and named as required by the grant guidelines.

Step 7: Submit the Application

The submission process is where all your hard work comes together. It's essential to ensure that the application is complete, accurate, and submitted on time via the correct platform. Late or incomplete submissions will typically not be considered.

Checklist

- Verify that all required sections of the application form are filled out.
- Double-check attachments for completeness and formatting compliance.
- Confirm submission deadlines in the EU Funding & Tenders Portal.
- Submit the application well in advance of the deadline to avoid technical issues.
- Save a copy of the submitted application and confirmation receipt for records.

Step 8: Follow Up on the Application

After submission, tracking the status of your application and responding fast to any inquiries is important. Some funding programs may request additional information or an interview during the evaluation phase.

Checklist

- Monitor the the status of your application regularly for updates.
- Respond promptly to any requests for clarification or additional documents.
- Prepare for possible interviews or presentations if required by the funder.
- Evaluate feedback provided post-decision to improve future applications.

4. TIPS FOR SUCCESS

How do I choose the right grant for my project?

Start by identifying grants that align with your project's objectives and eligibility criteria.

Review the EU Funding & Tenders Portal, national/regional funding sources, and university-specific opportunities. Check previous winning projects to understand what funders typically support.

What are common mistakes to avoid in grant applications?

Some common mistakes include:

- Submitting applications late or rushing the process.
- Failing to align the proposal with the funder's priorities.
- Overcomplicating the language instead of writing clearly and concisely.
- Providing an unrealistic budget or missing required documents.
- Neglecting to follow formatting and page limit instructions.

How do I write a strong and convincing proposal?

Make sure your proposal clearly states:

- The problem your project is solving and why it matters.
- Specific objectives linked to measurable outcomes.
- A realistic work plan showing feasibility.
- A well-justified budget that aligns with project needs.
- A sustainability plan showing long-term impact beyond funding.
- Your team's expertise, proving you have the right skills to execute the project.

How do I strengthen my consortium if the grant requires partnerships?

To build a strong consortium, seek partners who complement your expertise and add value to the project, such as universities, industry organizations, NGOs, or public entities. Ensure each partner has a clearly defined role aligned with the grant objectives. Strengthen collaboration by establishing clear communication channels, governance structures, and regular updates. Including partners from relevant geographic areas or sectors can boost the proposal's competitiveness. Lastly, secure letters of intent early to demonstrate commitment.



What are common mistakes in grant applications, and how can I avoid them?

Common mistakes include weak project objectives, weak alignment with funding priorities, incomplete budgets, and missing documents. To avoid these, carefully read the call guidelines, clearly define measurable goals, ensure financial accuracy, and double-check all required attachments before submission. Involve team members in reviewing the proposal to catch inconsistencies or gaps, and, if possible, seek feedback from previous grant recipients or experts before finalizing the application.

How detailed should the project budget be?

The budget should be as detailed and transparent as possible, breaking down costs into categories such as personnel, equipment, travel, subcontracting, and indirect costs. Justify each expense by linking it to project activities, ensuring alignment with the grant's funding rules. Avoid overestimating or underestimating expenses—both can weaken your credibility. Using budget templates provided by the funding body can help ensure compliance with expected formats.

How can I make my application stand out?

A strong application clearly articulates the problem, presents an innovative yet feasible solution, and demonstrates a high potential for impact. Use data and case studies to support claims, define a structured work plan, and highlight how your project aligns with EU priorities. Engaging storytelling and a visually clear format can also help evaluators grasp key points quickly. Strong partnerships and well-defined dissemination strategies further enhance the proposal's credibility.



The overall objective of the Start-DSP project is to enhance the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in Higher Education Institutions. By providing innovative learning materials and focusing on digital, sustainable, and ethical business practices, the project aims to better equip educators and, in turn, empower students to address contemporary global challenges through entrepreneurship.

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