



INGENIOUS

INNOVATION GRANT GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS



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Introduction

The Eurocluster INGENIOUS supports Europe's industry to gain sovereignty, drive competitive sustainability, be the world's first climate-neutral continent by 2050, and shape Europe's digital future. Ingenious has a special focus on SME support as they are the backbone of the economy and will support them with the new steps on building resilience and on the green and digital transition.

The INGENIOUS project serves as a lever for the companies to implement highly innovative solutions towards resilience and green and digital transition via three financial instruments - Innovation Grant, Training Grant, and Internationalization Grant. The applicants can apply for several grants (Training, Internationalisation and Innovation), considering that **the total maximum funding must not exceed € 60.000 per SME**. The total direct financial support for SMEs under INGENIOUS programme is **1.05 Million Euros**.

The Innovation Grant competitive scheme provides direct financial support to innovative SMEs in order to enable and promote the adoption of processes and technologies to reinforce transformation into a greener, more digital and resilient economy in the Energy Intensive Industries (EII) value chain. This document contains all the comprehensive information on **The Innovation Grant Open Call**.

INGENIOUS partners

Logo	Member	Website	Country
 Mazovia Cluster ICT	Mazovia Cluster ICT	https://klasterict.pl/en/strona-glowna-english/	PL
	BalticNet-PlasmaTec	https://www.balticnet-plasmatec.org/	DE
	CLUSTER DE FABRICACION AVANZADA DE LA INDUSTRIA DEL METAL DE ASTURIAS-METAINDUSTRY4	https://metaindustry4.com/en/	SP
	NANO PROGRESS Z.S	https://www.nanoprogress.eu/	CZ

Contact person

Azucena Jiménez, PhD, Cluster MetalIndustry4
Marqués de San Esteban, 1 - 7º 33206 Gijón – Asturias
Email: proyectos@metaindustry4.com

Topics to be funded

The **INGENIOUS Innovation Grants** will support projects that are aligned with the major challenges where SMEs need to accelerate the implementation of the digital and green transformation by a) providing affordable, clean and efficient technology solutions, b) developing new business models, c) innovating their services, technology and production lines, d) open new markets, etc.

Challenges in EIs	Examples of measures (actions)
Challenge 1. Efficient and sustainable decarbonisation processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Development of technologies for the incorporation of alternative non-fossil carbon sources.B. Development of innovative technologies for the safe use of green hydrogen in industrial installations.C. Development of systems for CO2 capture, storage and use in industrial installations, to avoid emissions from combustion or processes.D. Research and development of alternative energy sources based on green electricity and green molecules.E. Quantitative reduction of GHG emission and reduction in the use of resources (energy, water, materials) in Energy Intensive Industries.

<p>Challenge 2. Technology improvement and/or product innovation for digital transition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Development and implementation of new digital technologies, such as Data & Analytics, Cloud Computing, Block chain, Artificial Intelligence (AI) among others, that enable intelligent control and governance of energy-intensive industrial processes that allow the integration of energy flows and the improvement of energy efficiency. B. Development of innovative solutions to substantially improve the energy efficiency of industrial processes. C. Development of new technologies and implementation of innovative solutions for heat recovery in production processes or the use of energy from secondary flows. D. Development of digital technologies for localization, tracking and mapping of materials and products for process improvement.
<p>Challenge 3. Technology improvement and/or product innovation for green transition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Development of solutions that enable smarter harnessing (optimization of the efficiency / usage) of renewable sources of energy (Solar Power, Wind Power, Hydropower, Geothermal Energy, Biomass, Biofuels ...). B. A safe use of green hydrogen in industrial installations. C. Design of process water circularity strategies. D. Recovering and re-use of heat and energy in industrial processes.
<p>Challenge 4. Closing loops for efficient and sustainable process innovation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Development and/or implementation of technology to increase the quality of recycling and its control. B. Development of new industrial processes for the treatment of recycled resources. C. Development and/or implementation of new technological solutions for the valorisation of by-products of production processes. D. Creation of a circular flow through sharing, repairing, reusing or recycling. E. Development and implementation of technological solutions for the use of waste as biofuels as substitutes for fossil fuels.

<p>Challenge 5. Ensuring safer and more efficient energy transition and supply</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. New developments and implementation of energy efficiency measures. B. Development of technologies for ensuring the uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price. C. Adoption of strategies to accelerate the transition from the use of fossil fuels to renewable energies. D. Implementation of solutions for green hydrogen as alternative energy source. E. Implementation of solutions and processes that will secure more effective quality control as for example improving the production data management and storage, controlling processes and quality assurance.
<p>Challenge 6. Advanced materials leading to competitive higher sustainability and digitalization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Creating new products from alternative resources. B. Re-using existing material as by-products of residues from production processes and/or advanced materials development. C. Incorporation of new raw materials and additives to reduce process emissions and EU-external dependency.
<p>Challenge 7. New-to-firm solutions and business strategies to face the challenges to overcome the EU-external dependency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Innovative strategies aim at addressing emerging skill needs, while other approaches aim at adjusting existing mechanisms and systems. B. Cross-cutting topics, highlighting the importance of new business models, new financial and investment methodologies or new advanced training skills. C. Development of innovative new-to-firm green solutions: products, services or business process innovations to be adopted in Energy Intensive industries and avoid external dependencies of the EU.

Funding scheme

The applicants can apply for a grant of max. €60.000 (including one mandatory training per SME for Resilience preparedness/business continuity training worth €250) covering 100% of the eligible expenses. The total budget reserved in Ingenious for the Innovation Grants is **€ 1.000.000.**

Maximum funding per SME	60.000 €
Maximum funding per project	180.000 €
Type of financial support	Lump-sum
Payments	50% pre-funding 25% after 6 months with intermediate report 25% after 12 months with final report

Lump-sum funding

Successful proposals shall receive the requested financial contribution in the form of a lump sum. A lump sum is an amount of money that can be used by beneficiaries for several purposes related to the achievement of the project objectives. It is necessary to provide an explanation in the application on how the lump sum will be used including a clear budget proposal (personnel, subcontracting, travels and consumables). Since the granting of a lump sum does not foresee the delivery of a detailed financial reporting and timesheets, the appropriateness of the project budget will be assessed by the evaluators considering the staff and technical requirements and monitored by the INGENIOUS coordinator. However, since beneficiaries will have to keep the original documents of their expenses (timesheets, invoices, contracts) in case of an audit, the following rules and limitations must be respected. The INGENIOUS consortium reserves the right to inspect documents relating to the implementation of the awarded project at every stage of its execution.

Payment terms

General terms

- All payments will be made in Euro's.
- Expenditures incurred before the Grant Agreement signature date, or after the project duration period are ineligible for remuneration.
- Costs incurred for the implementation of the project must be used for the sole purpose of achieving the objectives of the project and its expected results, in a transparent manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- Beneficiaries have to set up internal contracts regulating their cooperation within their consortium. INGENIOUS will not be responsible for paying any costs applied for and incurred by the beneficiaries in case of non-compliance with the terms and conditions of the INGENIOUS funding scheme.
- Submission of an application does not constitute an entitlement for funding.
- The recipients of the (financial) support must ensure that the European Commission, the European Anti-fraud Office (OLAF) and the Court of Auditors (ECA) can exercise their powers of control, on documents, information, even stored on electronic media, or on the final recipient's premises.

- A combination of Training, Internationalisation and Innovation Grants is possible, but the maximum amount for one SME must not exceed €60.000.
- In order to avoid double financing/co-financing, confirmation will be required that there has been no double-financing of expenses through other financial sources and an application for the same project has been submitted under another Eurocluster call.
- The project plan for Innovation Grant shall contain two clearly defined milestones, which are realistically reflecting the progress of the project.
- Payment will be made in three terms:
 - Pre-financing payment: 50% of the requested budget will be paid within 30 days after the Grant Agreement signature date.
 - Interim payment: 25% of the remaining budget will be paid within 30 days after MS1 achievement and Interim Report approval (halfway through the project). INGENIOUS will provide an Interim Report template to the beneficiaries.
 - Final payment: the remaining budget will be paid within 30 days after MS2 achievement and Final Report approval. INGENIOUS will provide a Final Report template to the beneficiaries.
- Payment will be transferred to the Lead Partner. The Lead Partner will be in charge of the payment to the other participating SMEs.
- In view of the fact that the funding was granted as part of a grant agreement, the agreement will include provisions for penalties or sanctions for non-compliance.

Eligible costs

The total financial contribution made by INGENIOUS shall not in any circumstances exceed the maximum amount of €60.000 per SME, including one mandatory training per SME for resilience preparedness/business continuity training worth €250, that will be organised by the INGENIOUS consortium choosing the best external expert for best value of money for all Innovation Grant awardees, and each beneficiary needs to include in her/his subcontracting costs € 250, since the training will be paid by each beneficiary directly to the external trainer. Thus, there will be no financial relation or any other relation between the trainer and any of the partners of the consortium.

Only costs generated during the lifetime of the project are eligible. Since the project is funded in the form of a lump sum, costs described in the submitted budget must be determined in accordance with the usual accounting and management principles and practices of the beneficiary.

Examples of **eligible costs**:

Ex1. Direct staff costs (personnel) - hourly cost of the staff of the beneficiary that is dedicated to actual work under the development of the project.¹

Ex2. Subcontracting costs (external expertise): work carried out by an external provider, which has entered into an agreement on business conditions with the beneficiary. The subcontracting needs to be in line with the procurement rules of the

¹ Hourly costs are calculated by taking the yearly salary excluding (holiday and performance- or profit based bonuses), multiplied by a factor 1.35 for coverage of employer/social costs, then the resulting amount multiplied by a factor 1.25 for overhead, and the total result being divided by 1.720 hrs per year on a 40-hourly working week basis.

beneficiary's company. If the beneficiary has no written procurement rules for this particular situation, then they need to follow and apply their usual national procurement practice. The external provider(s) cannot be one of the consortium partners. Note that up to 50% subcontracting is allowed € 250 needs to be included in subcontracting costs for the mandatory resilience preparedness/business continuity training.

Ex3. Other costs: further direct incurred costs can be claimed, like travel expenses and consumables.

Ex4. Prototype and material costs relevant to the execution of the project are eligible as consumables.

Examples of **ineligible** costs:

Ex1. Depreciation costs of equipment, infrastructure or other assets necessary for the project incurred and invoiced to the participating SME(s).

Ex2. Deductible VAT.

Eligible activities

The following are potential eligible activities for funding (although this is not an exhaustive list):

- Development of a prototype
- Demonstrating technologies in a relevant or operational environment
- Testing technologies in a relevant or operational environment
- Validation of technologies
- Designing a business case
- Designing and engineering a pilot
- Process optimisation
- Product development

How to apply?

Grant applications are submitted through the INGENIOUS website <https://ingenious-eurocluster.eu/innovation-grants/> only. The consortium submits the grant application in pdf form (available on INGENIOUS website). A full guide of submission is provided below:

Who can apply?

The Innovation Grant addresses small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in the Energy Intensive Industries and other SMEs that can be providers of solutions to the EII towards green and digital transition and resilience.

Other entities such as large companies, research institutes, universities, knowledge providers, associations, foundations, etc. can assist the SME partners in the implementation of the action (e.g. acting as subcontractors) but they **cannot be direct beneficiaries** in the project.

Members of the Cluster organisations participating in the project are eligible to apply, but project partners cannot.

Requirements for applicants

- Applicants must declare their SME status in accordance with the SME definition of the European Union².
- At least 10% of the supported SMEs will come from EU regions different from the countries of individual Euroclusters' partners. Specific attention will be paid to EU-13 countries in the calls and those EU regions with which the Euroclusters' partners had no previous cooperation and shall focus on engaging actors from regions with different levels of economic development. INGENIOUS consortium will keep track of this in the eligibility of proposals-phase following the closure of the Open Call and prior to the assessment.
- Applicants need to be active in some of the following sectors:
 - Energy Intensive Industries: metalworking, nano, plasma technology, raw materials, chemistry, construction
 - Solution provider: ICT, energy resources, circular economy, advanced manufacturing
- Applicants must declare their financial stability
- Applicants must be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - [EU Member States](#) (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs)) and Ukraine
 - non-EU countries:
 - listed EEA countries and countries associated to the COSME part of the Single Market Programme or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature ([list of participating countries](#))
 - Hungarian applicants should not be excluded from participating in the Innovation Grant but Hungarian applicants will need to verify that their entities receiving FSTP funds are not part of the entities listed in [the link](#)

Consortium composition

The SMEs should form consortia consisting of a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 3 SMEs. SMEs of EU and Ukraine are eligible to participate. Potential consortium that can be comprised by 2 or 3 SMEs:

- a) 1 SME as challenge owner and 1 SME as a solution provider.
- b) 2 SMEs as challenge owners and 1 SME as a solution provider.

² https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-definition_en

- c) 1 SME as challenge owner and 2 SMEs as solution providers.

What are the expected TRLs for activities to be funded?

The expected TRLs for funded activities under this open call have to be between TRL 6-9. The projects have to be minimum at TRL 5 at the beginning of the project activities. TRL means [Technology Readiness Level](#) and it's a method for estimating the maturity a technology solution during the acquisition phase of a program.

TRL 6 – Technology demonstrated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)

TRL 7 – System prototype demonstration in operational environment

TRL 8 – System complete and qualified

TRL 9 – actual system proven in operational environment (competitive manufacturing in the case of key enabling technologies; or in space.

Submission

Applicants need to submit their application via the INGENIOUS website using the application templates provided for Innovation Grants.

<https://ingenious-eurocluster.eu/innovation-grants/>

Assessment and timeline

One call is foreseen during the course of the INGENIOUS project for Innovation Grants.

Proposal Submission:

- Open May 15th, 2023 at 09:00hr CEST
- Closing July 31st, 2023 at 17:00hr CEST

Applications can only be handed in during this call period, **no rectification period is foreseen** in this Open Call. The INGENIOUS consortium will do the pre-selection of the proposals and the 12 highest ranked proposals will be forwarded to external evaluators (please see further information in the section Evaluation phase at page 13). Funding will be based on quality, rationale and feasibility of each project. The assessment period lasts up to three months starting upon closure, after which the results will be made public on the website: <https://ingenious-eurocluster.eu> and applicants will be informed. The successful applicant needs to sign a formal contract with the INGENIOUS coordinator (the 'Grant Agreement') within 20 days. In case the signature is not accomplished by this date, the Innovation Grant will be revoked and INGENIOUS will award the following project on the waiting list. The Grant is valid for up to 12 months starting on January 1st, 2024.

Pre-selection:

- Opening: August 1st, 2023
- Closing: August 31st, 2023

Evaluation:

- Opening: September 1st, 2023
- Closing: October 31st, 2023

Signature of Grant Agreement:

- Opening: November 1st, 2023
- Closing: December 15th, 2023

Project Start:

- January 1st, 2024

Project Duration

12 months

Results of the Call

Publication of

- a) Ranking list of awarded projects
- b) Factsheets of the awarded projects

Date: March, 2025

Mandatory Documents

The application documents must include: Application form, Ethics issue declaration, Financial declaration, and Participating partner profiles. Applicants must provide complete, accurate data and contact details. Only full and correct applications will be considered. It is highly recommended to submit the application before the deadline to avoid failures due to technical issues. A guide for proposal submission, including the template, is available on <https://ingenious-eurocluster.eu/innovation-grants/>

All documents must be signed by the legal representative of the organisation of the Lead Partner. The documents can contain handwritten + SME stamp or electronic signatures.

Language

English is the official language for INGENIOUS open call. Submissions done in any other language will not be evaluated. English is also the only official language during the whole execution of the INGENIOUS project. This means that any requested reports must be done in English in order to be accepted.

Gender dimension

As gender equality is an overall priority in the call, proposals that provide a gender balance with regards to the people involved in the action will prevail.

Additional requirements

In addition, for the whole selection and evaluation process and the duration of the agreement with Mazovia Cluster ICT as INGENIOUS project coordinator, selected applicants must commit to comply with the obligations that the European Commission set in the Grant Agreement with Mazovia Cluster ICT, including, among others:

- Avoid conflicts of interest (Article 12 GA)
- Maintain confidentiality (Article 13 GA).
- Promote the action and give visibility to the EU funding (Article 17 GA).
- Liability for damages (Article 33 GA).

Consent to publication

The INGENIOUS consortium shall be granted the authorization to disclose the subsequent information:

- Description of actions undertaken by the beneficiaries
- Date of the grant allocation
- Duration of the funding
- Name of the beneficiaries and corresponding websites

Evaluation phases

The evaluation procedures are designed to identify the best proposals in terms of excellence, impact, quality and efficiency of the implementation, as thoroughly and accurately as possible. The technical excellence is a must of the proposal itself, along with the innovativeness of the envisaged solution in the target sector for which the support is requested. The assessment will be undertaken in a fair, transparent and homogeneous way for all the proposals submitted under the call. Applications can only be handed in during the call period (see timeline above).

Pre-selection

A team composed of one representative from each INGENIOUS consortium partner staff will realise the pre-selection of the proposals. First, the fulfilment of the requirements and the adjustment of the proposals to the strategy of the Open Call will be verified. Only the eligible proposals will be then evaluated according to the evaluation criteria listed below (excellence, impact and quality). The average of the three scores resulting from each criterium in the assessment will be drawn in the pre-selection list. The 12 projects with the highest average score will be move to the next stage, that will be the external evaluation. A Proposal

Evaluation Form will be established for and filled in for each proposal and a summary report with the feedback will be sent to all applicants.

External evaluation

A database of external independent experts will be prepared. Two experts will evaluate each proposal according to the same evaluation criteria used in the pre-selection (listed below). The average of the two scores will be drawn in the external evaluation list. The Proposal Evaluation Form will be filled in by the external evaluators for each of the 12 proposals and a summary report with the feedback will be sent to all applicants by members of the INGENIOUS consortium.

The cumulative scores of the evaluations will be tallied, and those with the highest scores will be granted.

A 'reserve list' will also be defined with applications that may, in the end, get funding if one or more applications in the 'ranking list' cannot sign a grant agreement. The final list of selected projects will include projects up to the budget exhaustion allocated to this Innovation Grant.

Redress procedure

For any enquiries and/ or complaints regarding the INGENIOUS lump sum scheme, please contact proyectos@metaindustry4.com or your local contact point (page 3). A request for redress can only be based on objective, clear, and well-documented evidence of the reasons for the complaint. It must clearly identify the application and be submitted by someone legally authorised to represent the applicant within ten calendar days of receiving notice of your evaluation results to the following email address: proyectos@metaindustry4.com. A redress committee, including representatives from INGENIOUS partnership members, will review the case and recommend an appropriate course of action. Its role is to ensure a coherent legal interpretation of requests and equal treatment of applicants. The redress procedure is concerned only with the evaluation process, and the scientific or technical judgement of the qualified experts is not in doubt. Only one request for redress per application will be considered. All requests for redress will be treated in confidence.

Communication of awarded projects

A final ranking list of awarded projects will be published and disseminated on all INGENIOUS and consortium partner social media channels, ECCP and INGENIOUS website. Additionally, a factsheet will be prepared for each of the awarded projects and they will be published on the INGENIOUS website <https://ingenious-eurocluster.eu/>

Evaluation criteria

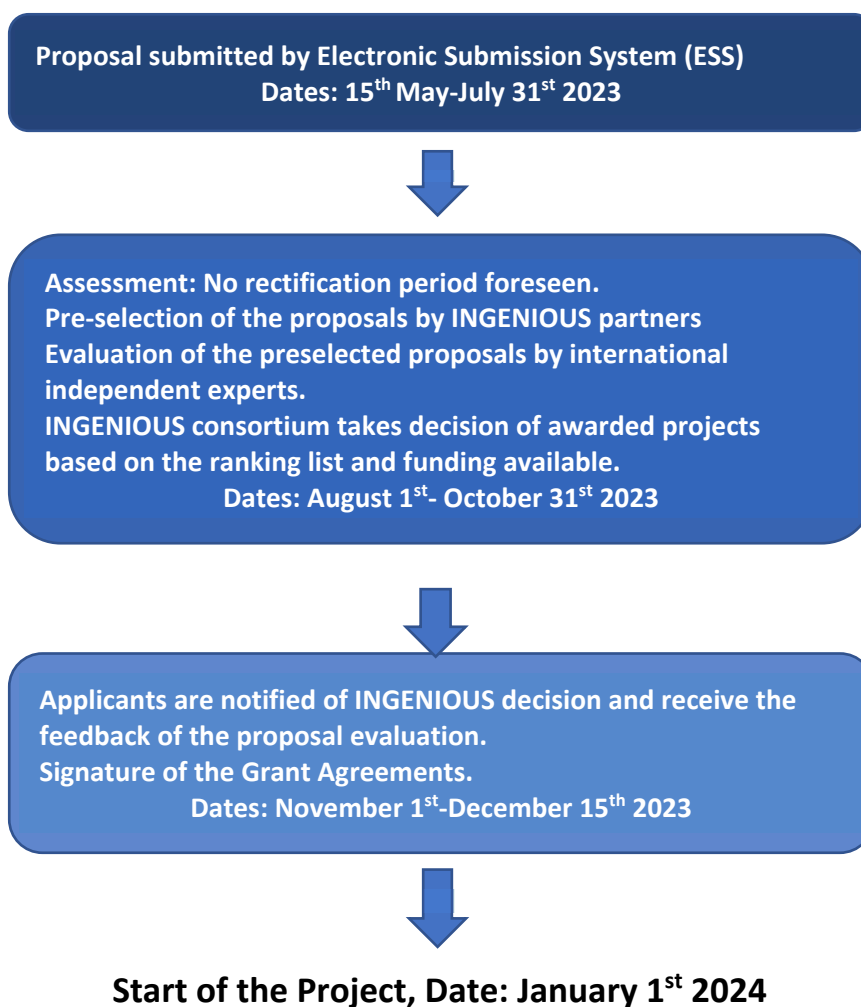
Proposals will be evaluated based on three evaluation criteria giving as a result of a score up to 100 points with a threshold of 70 points in total:

- 1) Excellence (40 points)
- 2) Impact (30 points)
- 3) Quality (30 points)

Criteria	Points
<p>Excellence:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Innovation potential idea aligned with the challenges. b) The solution will contribute to the challenge, overcome the barriers and meet the challenges identified by INGENIOUS. c) Innovative solutions that go beyond the state of the art in comparison with existing or competing with existing solutions. d) Alignment of proposal with the challenges. 	<p>40 (Threshold 25/40)</p>
<p>Impact:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Realistic and relevant description of how the innovation will have impact on the participating companies. b) The solution will increase digitalisation, sustainability and resilience in the target industry (digital, green, resilient). c) The solution will have a sound impact on the whole value chain, considering providers and end users. d) The solution will be available in Europe and be made with components produced in Europe (resilient). e) Clear definition of the strategy to up-scale the solution and achieve the market. f) Clear business continuity plan for the solution considering both the technology development phase and the commercialisation. 	<p>30 (Threshold 20/30)</p>
<p>Quality:</p>	<p>30 (Threshold 20/30)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Quality and complementarity of the participants and extent to which the consortium as whole brings together the necessary expertise. b) Quality and effectiveness of the work plan. c) Balance of the allocation of tasks and resources, ensuring that all the participants have a valid role and adequate resources in the project to fulfil that role. d) The objectives defined are clear and realistic considering the project duration and scope e) Realistic identification of critical risks and uncertainties. 	
TOTAL	100 (Threshold 70/100)

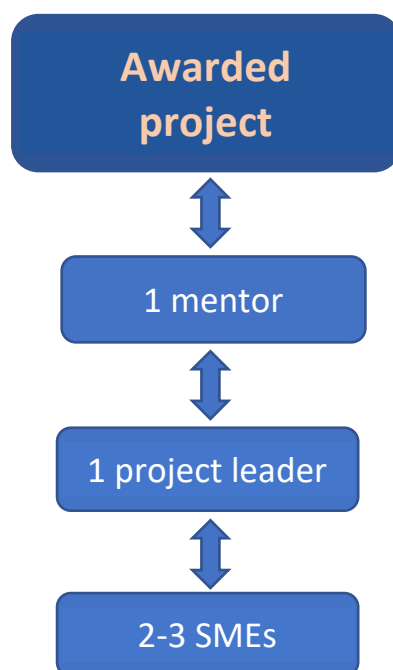
Timeline



Monitoring the project

Each project granted by INGENIOUS appoints a Leader Partner, who is the main contact for the INGENIOUS team. In order to receive the lump sum, the consortium must complete and submit both an interim and final report (INGENIOUS will provide the beneficiaries with templates). To monitor this process, INGENIOUS will designate a mentor for each project to ensure its proper development and guide the team clearing up their doubts.

During the runtime of a project, the project partners must inform the mentor immediately when an occurring problem that might endanger the success of the project in any way. INGENIOUS consortium reserves the right to inspect documents relating to the implementation of a project at every stage of its execution.



Mentors

Each awarded project will have a mentor to guide the team and monitor the actions providing direct advice in the course of the project. Mentors will be from the INGENIOUS consortium and will be a contact point for the project SME leaders. All the information regarding the mentors role and liabilities assumed by the SMEs will be informed once the Grant Agreement of the awarded projects is signed.

Interim report

An interim report has to be submitted within one month after the first half of the project duration (latest end of July 2024) using the INGENIOUS template. This must include: i) Progress of the project with a short description of the work done by all partners, ii) Any problems or

delays in the project and the measures to solve it, iii) Description report about budget spent by each partner.

Final report

The Final Report has to be submitted within one month after the final of the project duration (latest end of January 2025) using the INGENIOUS template. This must include: i) Results of the project, ii) Comparison of what was predicted in the proposal with the results/objectives arisen, iii) Impact of the project for each beneficiary. Iv) Justification of the appropriate use of the funds for each beneficiary, v) Global assessment of INGENIOUS support and project.