dRural

Annex 2b: Open Call Guidelines for Complex Service Providers

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101017304.

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1. Introduction

This document provides guidance information regarding the dRural Open Call for Regional Demonstrators, with a focus on Complex Service Providers, as well as the eligibility and evaluation criteria. Including this document, all associated Annexes must be read carefully for the submission of an Application.

dRural overall goal is to co-develop and implement a digital solution based on the exploitation of data from existing service platforms that deliver multiple innovative services to rural citizens while creating opportunities for economic growth and quality of life improvements. As such, the project aspires to become the service marketplace of reference for European rural areas.

dRural will build a service marketplace for rural areas and communities that will be demonstrated in four pilots in rural regions of Europe, namely:

- Extremadura (Spain),
- Jämtland Härjedalen (Sweden),
- Dubrovnik-Neretva County (Croatia) and
- Region Gelderland Midden (Netherland).

Each of these settings is called a **Regional Demonstrator**.

dRural will organize an Open Call for innovative services to be deployed in the above Regional Demonstrators. This Open Call focuses on two types of services: **Complex Services** and **Simple Services** with the objective: to attract, select and fund the best solutions IT developers on one hand, and direct service providers with no technical infrastructure on the other hand, to enhance the quality of life in rural areas by establishing stronger links in communities and extending the reach of services provided.

Table 1: dRural Open Call in a nutshell

Strands	Number of awarded providers per region	Funding granted per provider	Total number of providers expected to be awarded (x4)	Time for implementation
1. Simple Service Providers (SSP)	20	€5,000	80	3 months
2. Complex Service Providers (CSP)	4	€50,000	16	6 months

1.1. Background information on dRural project

All the information about the dRural project, approach of the Open Call for Regional Demonstrators and challenge definition relevant for Complex Service Providers is described in Annex 1b: Open Call Text for Complex Service Providers.

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1.2. Funding scheme

The funding from dRural Open Call for Complex Service Providers is deliverable based, provided in two installments. As such, there will be no need for cost justifications and getting the funding will be associated with the achievement of the relevant deliverable, which means that the administration burden will be removed from the participants. HOWEVER, the Subgrantee is required to keep all documents relating to the sub-project contract for five years after the conclusion of the dRural project, should the EC decide to arrange a financial audit to be carried out. For more details, see Section 7 – Financial audits and controls.

The awarded **Complex Service Providers** will receive their funding of **50,000€ in two instalments** – 15,000€ after receiving a positive assessment regarding their first deliverable from the dRural consortium and 35,000€ one month after the end of their project, subject to receiving a positive assessment regarding their second deliverable from the dRural consortium.

Structure of these deliverables is explained in Section 6 of this document.

1.3. Timeline – Open Calls for Regional Demonstrators

Submission to the Open Call for Regional Demonstrators will be enabled on the 15th of October 2022 and will end on the 15th of January 2023 at 17:00 CET time (Brussels time). Figure 1 presents the indicative timeline during which each phase of the dRural Open Call for Regional Demonstrators will take place. The dates may change due to unforeseen events and situations. Therefore, these are an indication of what is initially expected; the dates are to be confirmed by the dRural team along the process and are not restrictive.

The dRural consortium reserves the right to cancel the Open Call at any point due to any unforeseen circumstances. The dRural consortium also reserves the right to extend the call and/or launch an additional call in case not enough applications of sufficient quality have been received via the Open Call for Regional Demonstrators.

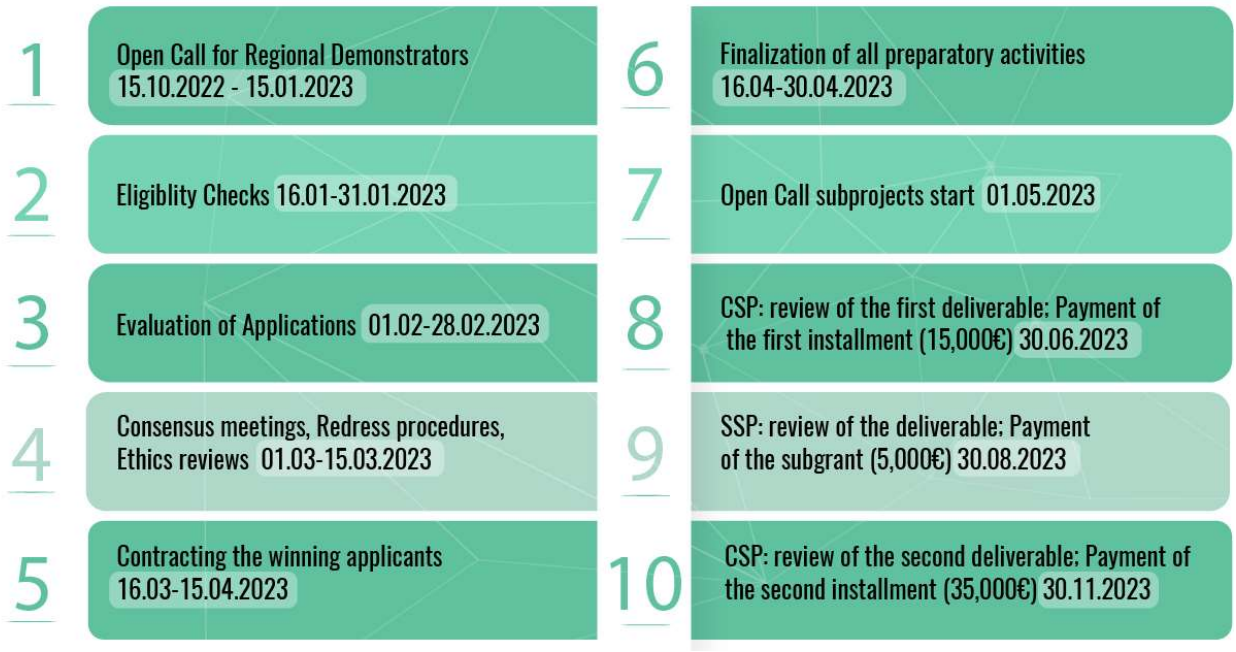

Figure 1 dRural Open Call for Regional Demonstrators timeline

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2. General information

2.1. Means of submission

The F6S platform (https://www.f6s.com/drural) will be the entry point for all Applicants' proposal submissions to dRural Open Call for Regional Demonstrators. Applications received by any other channel will be automatically discarded.

Documents required in subsequent stages will be sent to the dRural partners managing the Open Call for Regional Demonstrators at: druralopencalls@foodscalehub.com

2.2. Language

Applications for dRural Open Call must be done either in English OR in the language of the Regional Demonstrator where the applicants aim to provide their solution in (more specifically: Extremadura - Spanish; Jämtland Härjedalen – Swedish, Dubrovnik-Neretva County – Croatian and Gelderland Midden - Dutch). Submissions done in other languages will be considered ineligible and will not be evaluated.

The official language of the Project is English and all process documents which include Annex 4 (Declaration of Honour), Annex 5 (Declaration of Conducting Business) in the **application submission stage** and Annex 6 (Bank account form), Annex 7b (Model Subgrantee Agreement Template for Complex Service Providers) for the **winning Complex Service Providers,** are also created in English.

The only documents that can be submitted in local languages are the Open Call Application Form and the deliverables that the winning Subgrantees will be required to submit in order to receive the funding. Nevertheless, the templates for these documents will be provided only in English.

2.3. Documentation format

Any additional document requested must be submitted electronically in PDF format without restrictions for printing.

2.4. Data protection

In order to process and evaluate applications, dRural will need to collect Personal and Industrial Data. F6S IE, as the Open Call Manager of the project will act as Data Controller for data submitted through the F6S platform for these purposes. The F6S platform's system design and operational procedures ensure that data is managed in compliance with The General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). Each applicant will accept the F6S terms to ensure compliance. Please note that dRural requests the minimum information needed to deliver the evaluation procedures or the support programme. Annexes 6: Bank account information and 7b Model Subgrantee Agreement Template for Complex Service Providers, are provided for reference and will only be requested if the SME is accepted in the dRural support programme. Please refer to https://www.f6s.com/privacy-policy to check F6S platform data privacy policy and security.

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Foodscale Hub (organization from Serbia), as the dRural Project Treasurer, will also have access to this information. Serbia Data Protection Law (Official Gazette of RS 87/2018) from 9 November 2018, with its' applicability starting from 21 August 2019 is fully in line with the EU's GDPR. All the work that will be conducted in Serbia follows the procedures and criteria that have been set and are in accordance with the standards and guidelines of the Horizon 2020 program, EU legislation, national legislation in Serbia, professional standards, and the law of the Republic of Serbia.

2.5. Origin of the funds

All Subgrantees will sign a dedicated Subgrantee Agreement with the dRural consortium. The funds attached to the Subgrantee Agreement come directly from the funds of the European Project dRural funded itself by the Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology, Resources and Support (DG Connect), and remain therefore, property of the EU until the payment of the balance, whose management rights have been transferred to the project partners in dRural via European Commission Grant Agreement Number 101017304. As it can be seen in the Model Subgrantee Agreement (Annex 7a and Annex 7b), this relation between the Subgrantees and the European Commission through dRural project carries a set of obligations to the Subgrantees with the European Commission. It is the task of the Subgrantees to accomplish them, and of the dRural consortium partners to inform about them.

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3. Application Eligibility Criteria

3.1. Target Applicants

dRural Open Call for Regional Demonstrators invites **Complex Service Providers** - SME operators of existing 'sectoral platforms' (energy, agro, open data, etc) that can be directly connected to the dRural solution and will serve to collect additional requirements to dRural IT platform and to test and validate it under a large variety of environments and test its capacity to encompass many types of different services. Applications are only allowed from single entities. No consortia are allowed.

Members of the dRural consortium cannot apply for any Open Call organized by the dRural project.

3.1.1. Definition of SME (Small or Medium sized Enterprise)

An SME will be considered as such if complying with the European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC and the SME user guide. As a summary, the criteria which define an SME are:

- Headcount in Annual Work Unit (AWU) less than 250.
- Annual turnover less or equal to €50 million OR annual balance sheet total less or equal to €43 million

3.2. Applicant Eligibility Criteria

For Complex Service Providers the following grant eligibility criteria include:

- The applicant is a SME legal entity established and based in one of the EU Member States or an H2020 Associated Country as defined in H2020 rules for participation.
- The applicant participates as a single entity and not as a part of a consortium.
- Signed Declaration of Honour stipulating that the entity is eligible for financing in line with eligibility rules of H2020, with the possibility for requests for additional documentation if/when required.
- The applicant has access to a data platform, provided by the applicant directly, by a third party through an agreement with the applicant (in which case a letter of commitment must be incorporated to the application) or that is publicly available. This must be clearly identified in the application form.
- The applicant provides (or intends to provide) services in one of the dRural Regional Demonstrators that can be integrated into the dRural platform.

Please note that a signed version of Annex 4: Declaration of Honour and Annex 5: Declaration of Conducting Business are mandatory for application submission.

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3.3. Application Eligibility Criteria

The following application eligibility criteria include:

- Each applicant may submit only one (1) application as Simple Service Providers **OR** one (1) application as Complex Service Providers.
- **Complex Service Providers**: applicants can only submit one application as Complex Service Providers to be implemented in one or several Regional Demonstrators. If the application is addressed to Several Demonstrators, the applicant will receive extra points in their total application score (as explained in the evaluation criteria), however, this will not increase the funding amount, which will be €50,000 in all cases.
- In case an applicant submits more than one application in the Open Call, only the last one received (timestamp of the system) will be considered, and the remaining applications will automatically be excluded from the evaluation process. If the last submitted application is declared as non-eligible or below the evaluation threshold, the other submitted applications will not be taken into consideration.
- The applicants must demonstrate that there is no risk of double funding. The fundamental principle underpinning the rules for public expenditure in the EU states that no costs for the same activity can be funded twice from the EU budget, as defined in the Article 111 of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation. In the case of applications submitted by linked SMEs, all must clearly state the differences between them including but not limited to, technical aspects, market strategy and team composition, so that no doubt remains that there is no risk of double funding. In order to properly assess these concerns dRural may assign all applications to the same set of evaluators and, should any doubt remain, exclude all applications.
- If one applicant needs to submit applications from multiple entities, then they need to create as many F6S profiles as applications that will be submitted.
- The maximum amount of direct funding that a Complex Service Provider can receive in total via the dRural Open Call for Regional Demonstrators is 50,000€.

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4. Application Submission

In the four Regional Demonstrators, dRural will select 16 Complex Service Providers. All winners of the Open Call need to fulfil the eligibility criteria stated in Section 3, sign and submit the same documents. At the time of application, all applicants must provide: Annex 4 (Declaration of Honour) and Annex 5 (Declaration of Conducting Business).

Winning Complex Service Providers must also provide: Annex 6 (Bank account information) and three signed copies of Annex 7b (Subgrantee Agreement for Complex Service Providers), which will be given to them upon being declared the winning Complex Service Providers of the Open Call for Regional Demonstrators. Figure 2 presents the indicative timeline during which each relevant phase for the applying Complex Service Providers of the dRural Open Call for Regional Demonstrators will take place. The dates may change due to unforeseen events and situations. Therefore, these are an indication of what is initially expected; the dates are to be confirmed by the dRural team along the process and are not restrictive.

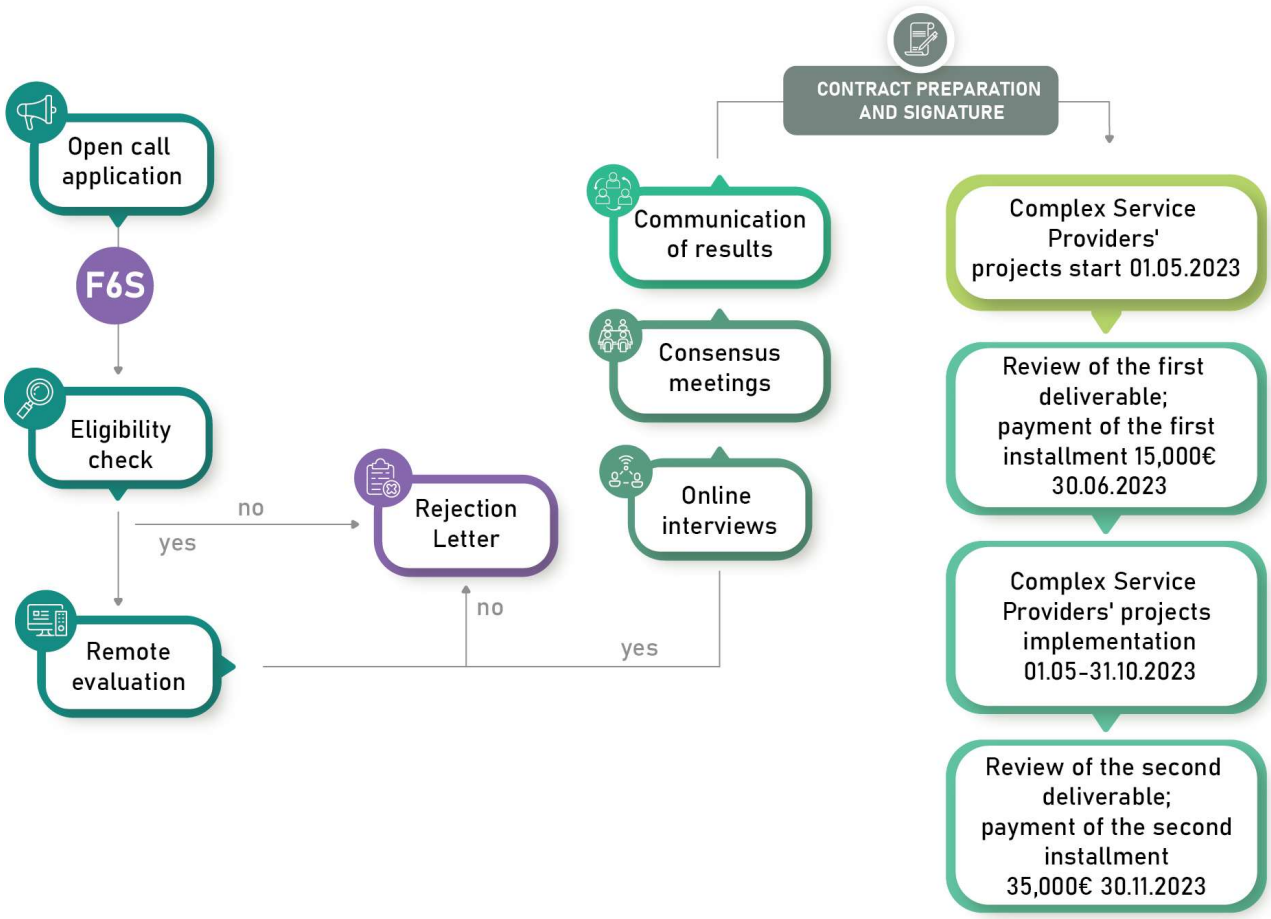

Figure 2 Open Call for Regional Demonstrators funnel – Complex Service Providers

From 15.10.2022 to 15.01.2023 a channel will be open on the F6S platform for the Open Call. The Open Call submission will follow the steps that are listed in this section. This channel will have eight trenches (four Regional Demonstrators times two types of Service Providers).

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4.1. Open Call Publication

The Open Call for Regional Demonstrators will be supported by:

- Annex 1a: Open Call Text for Simple Service Providers and **Annex 1b: Open Call Text for Complex Service Providers,** that provide information regarding the Open Call for Regional Demonstrators for the respective applicants
- Annex 2a: Open Call Guidelines for Simple Service Providers and **Annex 2b: Open Call Guidelines for Complex Service Providers,** that set out the guidelines for participation in the dRural Open Call for Regional Demonstrators for respective applicants. It also includes the eligibility and evaluation criteria.
- Annex 3a: Application Form for Simple Service Providers and **Annex 3b: Application Form for Complex Service Providers,** application form available at www.f6s.com/drural-simple-service-providers-oc/apply or **www.f6s.com/drural-complex-service-providers-oc/apply,** with questions that need to be addressed by the applicants.
- **Annex 4: Declaration of Honour,** which declares that all conditions of the Open Call are accepted by the applying entitiy's legal representative.
- **Annex 5: Declaration of Conducting Business,** which evaluates the status of the entity applying for the Open Call for Regional Demonstrators.
- **Annex 6: Bank Account Information,** which collects information on the applicant's bank account where the dRural payments will be transferred to. (only for winners of the Open Call)
- Annex 7a: Model Subgrantee Agreement for Simple Service Providers and **Annex 7b: Model Sugrantee Agreement Template for Complex Service Providers,** that the successful Simple Service Providers and Complex Service Providers will be requested to sign. (only for winners of the Open Call)*
- Frequently asked questions & answers published at the community feed (www.f6s.com/drural-simple-service-providers-oc/discuss and **www.f6s.com/drural-complex-service-providers-oc/discuss**)

*This document serves as a reference. The Subgrantee Agreement that will be given to the winning applicants will be finalized during the contracting phase.

4.2. Applicants Registration

Interested applicants should register at the F6S page (www.f6s.com/drural-complex-service-providers-oc/apply). This will be the central interface for managing the proposal applications for the remainder of the Open Call.

The dRural Open Call for Regional Demonstrators will also be visible at the dRural website, as well as the EC website.

4.3. Application Preparation

Please follow the steps:

1. For the application preparation, the applicants are requested to apply online and answer all mandatory questions (with no exception) at www.f6s.com/drural-complex-service-providers-oc/apply. Applicants must submit all requested documents on this website as well.

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2. Applicants that do not accept the terms and conditions and do not sign and upload to the F6S platform the completed Declaration of Honour (Annex 4) and the Declaration of Conducting Business (Annex 5), both in PDF format, will not be eligible. Later submissions of these documents will not be accepted.
3. Applicants are encouraged to be concrete and concise. Questions have character limitations. Please examine all the open call documents and attend the various events organized by the dRural project (www.drural.eu).
4. In case applicants have any technical difficulties, they should contact the F6S support team at support@f6s.com, cc'ing the dRural team mail druralopencalls@foodscalehub.com.

It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the application. Failure of the application to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays or working from multiple browsers or multiple browser windows, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the application as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

4.4. Application reception

Submissions will ONLY be done via the F6S platform on www.f6s.com/drural-complex-service-providers-oc/apply. A full list of applicants will be drafted containing their basic information for statistical purposes and clarity (which will be also shared with the EC for transparency). The application reception will close at 17:00 CET (Brussels time) on 15th of January 2023.

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5. Evaluation process and evaluation criteria

5.1. Procedures for Complex Service Providers to enter the dRural Open Call for Regional Demonstrators

Step 1: Eligibility check

After the Open Call for Regional Demonstrators has been closed, a filtering process will be carried out in order to discard non-eligible applications. This procedural part of the evaluation will verify if:

- The proposing entity is eligible for EC funding under the rules of H2020 [Y/N]
- The proposing entity is an SME as defined in section in section "3.1 Target Applicants" [Y/N]
- The applicant provides (or intends to provide) services in one of the dRural Regional Demonstrators that can be integrated into the dRural platform [Y/N]
- Is the participation rule as expressed in section "Application Eligibility Criteria" followed [Y/N]
- Is the application written in English OR in the language of the Regional Demonstrator where the applicant aims to provide their service in [Y/N]?
- Are all required documents: Annex 4: Declaration of Honour and Annex 5: Declaration of Conducting Business correctly submitted? [Y/N]
- Is the applicant participating as a single entity (and not as a member of a consortium)? [Y/N]
- Does the applicant have access to a data platform, provided by the applicant directly, by a third party through an agreement with the applicant (in which case a letter of support must have been incorporated to the application) or that is publicly available? This must be clearly identified in the application form [Y/N]

The eligibility check will be carried out by dRural partner managing the Open Call for Regional Demonstrators, Foodscale Hub, in the last two weeks of January 2023.

dRural partners will only forward the eligible applications to evaluation. Please note that only complete applications will be considered, those with missing information or missing answers will be discarded.

During the eligibility check the applicants might be requested to provide additional explanations if their application raises questions such as, but not limited to, ambiguity of the information, inconsistencies which are obvious error, among others. In that case, applicants may dispose **3 working days** from the day of notification to correct or provide additional documents to complete their initial application. If the requested corrections are not provided in the time specified, their application will be discarded and will not continue to evaluation.

Step 2: Remote Evaluation

Remotely each application will be evaluated by at least two field experts in relevant regions (one business expert and one technical expert). Up to three applicants per Open Call trench will be put on the Reserve list.

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Applications will be scored based on the following evaluation criteria:

Table 2: dRural Evaluation Criteria elaboration for Complex Service Providers

Criteria	Description
Criterion 1: Alignment	Extent to which the proposed service is aligned with the dRural project in general, and more specifically with dRural Open Call for Regional Demonstrators' objectives and requirements, regional marketplaces and strategic arenas, as described in Annex 1b: Open Call Text for Complex Service Providers. Extent to which the service proposed solves a rural need identified and addressing it is significant for the relevant stakeholders, providing specific value and being different from competition.
Criterion 2: Excellence	Extent to which applications demonstrate technical excellence, high level of innovativeness and ability to go beyond the state-of-the-art. The applicant should explain the technology behind the project and the TRL they expect to reach at the end of their dRural Open Call subproject. The applicant should provide information about the level of innovation within their market, degree of differentiation that this project will bring and to what extent the solution will go beyond the State of Art. The applicants should demonstrate how they plan the service development and what is their ambition to do it with dRural support.
Criterion 3: Impact	Extent to which the application is ambitious to improve quality of life in rural areas, indicating expected economic, technological, and societal impact on the Regional Demonstrator. Strength of the marketing strategy and plan to reach customers. Credibility of the applicant's strategy to exploit the service beyond the dRural open call period and that there is a real interest in following up commercially.
Criterion 4: Implementation	Extent to which the work plan is complete and coherent to ensure an effective implementation. Soundness of the approach.
Criterion 5: Team	Appropriateness of the team to meet the dRural challenge. Technical capacity, experience, excellence, and quality of the team.

Each criterion will have a mark between 1 and 5. Half point scores are not given. For each criterion under examination, score values will indicate the following assessments:

1 – Fail	The application fails to address the issue under examination or provides insufficient information.
2 – Poor	The issue is addressed in an unsatisfactory manner.
3 – Average	The application addresses the issue, but there are significant weaknesses.
4 – Good	The application addresses the issue well, but there is clear room for improvement.
5 – Excellent	The application successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the issue in question and if there are any shortcomings, they are minor.

The threshold for of these criterions will be three (3).

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Each evaluator will record their individual opinion of each application on an Individual Evaluation Report which will be sent to the leading Regional Demonstrator partner, who will summarize the reports into an Evaluation Summary Report.

Foodscale Hub, as the dRural partner managing the Open Call for Regional Demonstrators will inform the applicants of the outcome of their applications, via the Evaluation Summary Report.

Step 3: Ranking and selection

The application evaluation criteria will be given the following weighing factors:

Table 3: dRural Evaluation Criteria for Complex Service Providers with weighing factors

Criteria	Weight	Scoring	Threshold
Criterion 1: Alignment	20%	1-5	3 out of 5
Criterion 2: Excellence	25%	1-5	3 out of 5
Criterion 3: Impact	25%	1-5	3 out of 5
Criterion 4: Implementation	20%	1-5	3 out of 5
Criterion 5: Team	10%	1-5	3 out of 5

At the end of the remote evaluation process all applications will be ranked based on the overall score.

The average for each criterion will be calculated from all reviewer evaluations. The average mark for all for every single criterion must be at least 3. If a criterion is rated on average below 3, the application will not be selected. The sum of these averaged scores results in the total evaluation score for each application (maximum score = 5).

Once the total evaluation score for each application is calculated, an applicant may obtain up to 0.5 points (thus, maximum score = 5.5):

- Up to **0.3 for deployment in other regional demonstrators** (0.2 for one additional Regional Demonstrator, 0.3 for more than one Regional Demonstrator).

- Up to **0.1** per deployment of the service in **other Regional Demonstrators' languages** (0.05 per one additional language, 0.1 for more than one).
- Up to **0.1** per deployment of the service in the following languages: **English, French and German** (0.05 for one of these languages, 0.1 for more than one).

The extra points will be added, and the applications will be reordered accordingly, resulting in the final ranking.

To apply the extra points, the application must be above the threshold.

Step 4: Ethics and data protection screening

By applying, applicants confirm that all proposed services, including the means of their delivery and upkeep, have been reviewed to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation on data protection, privacy, and fundamental rights.

In addition, applications under serious consideration for founding, will be subject to **ethics and data protection screening**. Applications that are placed under the serious consideration will be screened by an Ethics Reviewer to identify issues or questions on the ethics of data protection aspects of the

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proposed service and its implementation. In case an application that is under the ethics screening process is written in the local language, the responsible partners from the Regional Demonstrators will assist the Ethics Reviewer in this process.

The Ethics Reviewer will list: (a) any ethics and data protection concerns that have been identified by the applicant and the steps they have proposed to address them; (b) any ethics and data protection concerns that have been identified by the Ethics Reviewer. Regarding (a), the Ethics Reviewer should evaluate the quality of the applicant's proposed measures to address the concerns. Regarding (b) the Ethics Reviewer may require or suggest specific measures to address the concerns, or they may instruct the applicant to develop appropriate measures.

The outcome of this screening can be of three forms: (i) the application raises no ethics or data protection issues sufficient to prevent its selection; (ii) the application raises ethics or data protection issues that should be addressed in order that it be suitable for selection; (iii) the application raises ethics or data protection issues sufficient to prevent its selection. In case (ii) or (iii) is selected, recommended actions by the applicant (in case ii) or justification (in case iii) should be provided.

The Ethics and Data Protection Screening Evaluation forms are passed on to the Application Evaluation team to be included as a factor in their decision as to which applications are selected.

Step 5: Award decision

Should two or more applications have the identical overall score, the leading promoter of the relevant Regional Demonstrator can hold an **Online interview** with the applicants to determine which application should be ranked higher. If the winner of the Open Call is not determined after the Online interview, a **Consensus meeting** will be held between the relevant evaluators and the leading local promoter of the Regional Demonstrator in question. These Consensus meetings will also be carried out in case the discrepancy in the marks given to a criterion (or more) by the two evaluators is at 3 or 4. Similarly, if the ethics review process raises concerns on one or several applications to a point that is unadvisable to fund it, a Consensus meeting will be organised to make a final decision.

Using the evaluation sheets received from the external evaluators, local promoters will prepare a single consensus **Evaluation Summary Report for each of the applications in question.**

At the end of this process, **16 applying Complex Service Providers** (four from each Regional Demonstrator on average) will be selected and three applicants from each regional demonstrator will remain on the **reserve list,** in case some winners fail to submit the necessary documentation before the end of the deadline.

IMPORTANT NOTE: It is planned that funding not allocated to a Regional Demonstrator, will be moved to other Regional Demonstrators so that all of the funding will be allocated to dRural Regional Demonstrators. This is not a binding condition, and the dRural consortium keeps the right to modify the final distribution, so that priority will be given to the best applications.

Step 6: Notification

All applications will receive an acceptance or rejection letter together with an anonymized version of their application's Evaluation Summary Report containing the average score for each criterion, overall score and synthesis of the comments from both the evaluation and the ethics and data protection screening process, if their application was subject to this screening process.

Redress procedure

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Within **five working days** of the delivery of a rejection letter considering the application as non-eligible or an Evaluation Summary Report that ranks the application below the selection borderline, the applicants might submit a request for redress to the leading local promoter of their respective Regional Demonstrator and the dRural team if they believe there has been a procedural shortcoming in the way their application has been evaluated or if they believe that the results of the eligibility checks are incorrect. The request for redress must be submitted in English language. The regional contacts are presented below. When sending the request for redress to a specific promoter of the Regional Demonstrator, the sender must also include the dRural Open Call team in the list of recipients via the following mail: **druralopencalls@foodscalehub.com.**

Extremadura (Spain)	info@dehesarural.es
Jämtland Härjedalen (Sweden)	info@deztinations.com
Dubrovnik-Neretva County (Croatia)	opencalldrural@tera.hr
Region Gelderland Midden (Netherland)	info@samenkwiek.nu

The redress may address the eligibility check and/or evaluation procedural activity of the application. The request for redress must clearly explain the redress points and elaborate on every stated point.

Request must be:

- Related to the evaluation procedural process or eligibility checks, for example errors like a freelancer (with a registered VAT number) being discarded as ineligible by accident,
- Clearly describing the complaint,
- Received within the time limit (five working days) from the reception of a rejection letter considering the application as non-eligible or an Evaluation Summary Report that ranks the application below the selection borderline,
- Sent by the SME legal representative, or the SME representative that has submitted the application, or the individual who submitted the application, if they applied as a freelancer with a registered VAT number.

In this case, **the review committee** (TICBIOMED as the Project Coordinator, WP5 core partners (F6S and FSH) and the local promoter of the relevant Regional Demonstrator) will examine the request for redress within two working days and decide whether the application in question will be re-evaluated or the request for redress will be rejected. If there is clear evidence of a shortcoming that could affect the eventual decision to select an applicant as a winning beneficiary of the Open Call, it is possible that all or part of the application will be re-evaluated.

The committee's role is to ensure a coherent interpretation of such requests and equal treatment of applicants.

Please note:

- This procedure is concerned only with the evaluation procedural activities and/or eligibility checking process. The committee will not call into question the business or technical judgement of appropriately qualified experts.
- Any redress request that calls into question the technical/business judgement of appropriately qualified experts will automatically be rejected.

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- A re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that affects the final decision on whether to select the applicant as a winning beneficiary or not. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if an application has failed anyway on other criteria.
- The evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. It may be lower than the original score.

Only one request for redress per application will be considered by the committee. If more requests for redress are submitted, only the first request sent will be taken into consideration. The application that is approved for re-evaluation will be re-evaluated timely and prior to the contract preparation phase. In case an application under the redress procedure is re-evaluated and the new evaluation score is higher, it will be included in the final overall ranking. In case the application under the redress procedure ranks higher than the last application on the initial list set to receive funding, then the application under the redress procedure will be determined the winner.

Step 7: Contract Preparation

After the Open Call evaluation conclusion and projects selection, the dRural Treasurer (FSH), assisted by the project Coordinator (TICBIOMED) will start the contract preparation in collaboration with the winning applications' representatives. Contract preparation will go via an administrative and financial checking. On a case-by-case approach, a phone call or teleconference may be needed for clarification.

The objective of the contract preparation is fulfilling the legal requirements between the dRural consortium and every beneficiary of the call. The items covered will be:

- To validate the status information of the SME, the following documents will be required:
  - **Legal existence**: Company Register, Official Gazette or other official document per country showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number and a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent).
  - Legal proof that the applicant's organization is not under liquidation or has filed for bankruptcy.
- **Bank Account Information**: The account where the funds will be transferred will be indicated via a form signed by the legal representative and the bank representative. The account should be a business bank account of the beneficiary. The financial information should not be older than three months.

The Subgrantee assumes full responsibility on the bank account info they provide through Annex 6. For instance, if they provide a wrong IBAN, and the dRural team proceeds with the transfer to that account, they will assume any costs related to the transfer (expenses with the return of the amount from the wrong bank account and/or expenses with the new transfer will be deducted from their grant transfer). Ultimately, in a worst-case scenario, if the dRural team does not manage to recover the amount transferred to the wrong bank account, the beneficiary who provided a wrong IBAN will not be able to claim that payment.

The request, by the dRural consortium, of the above documentation will be done within designated deadlines. The subproject contract negotiations will be carried out between 16th of March and 15th of April 2023.

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In case negotiations have not been concluded within the above period, the application is automatically rejected and the next application in the reserve list is invited.

Step 8: Contract signature

At the end of the negotiation phase, the Subgrantee agreement will be signed between the dRural consortium represented by its Coordinator (TICBIOMED) and the Treasurer (FSH) and the winning SME.

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6. Subproject Execution Summary

6.1. Support provided to subgrantees

The winning Complex Service Providers will have access to business, technology, and integration support, provided by the dRural partners in the form of guidelines and workshops.

The Subgrantees in each Regional Demonstrator will have a contact point that will act as bridge between them and the dRural project. They will address their questions and forward their requests to the appropriate dRural partner. In addition, the Subgrantees will be able to post questions on the F6S Q&A forum where their questions will be publicly answered.

6.2. Implementation summary

6.2.1. Complex Service Providers

Each of the Complex Service Providers winning projects will go through the following processes.

Evaluation & payment

Step 1			
When	Complex Service Providers' applications evaluation	Estimated month	February 2023.
Mean	Evaluation of the submitted application		
If successful	The applicant signs the contract, and the project starts		
Step 2			
When	At early stages of the Subgrantee's project	Estimated month	June 2023.
Mean	Review of the submitted first deliverable		
If successful	The Subgrantee receives the first instalment of the financing for 15,000€		
Step 3			
When	Upon the end of the project implementation	Estimated month	November 2023.
Mean	Review of the submitted second deliverable		
If successful	The Subgrantee receives the second installment of the financing for 35,000€		

The Subgrantee representative should submit the relevant deliverables at least one (1) week in advance, so that the reviewers will be able to prepare. During the review, the Subgrantee team members will be asked to elaborate their work, answer questions and present their solution.

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Deliverables

#	Name	Description	Due date
D1	Complex Service definition and development plan	A report describing: (1) A detailed description of the Complex Service design. (2) A detailed work plan for its development and implementation. (3) KPI to be measured at the project end (4) Ethics assessments. incorporating the comments received from the evaluators and dRural partners.	M1 31.05.2023
D2	Complex Service Implementation report	A report describing: (1) KPI achieved results (2) the results of the implemented activities: service developed, market traction achieved, impacts in the regional demonstrator, etc. (3) recommendations for improving the dRural solution based on usage. (4) The sustainability strategy and approach to continue offering the service in the marketplace (post-project). (5) Ethics assessment.	M6 31.10.2023

(*) Templates for deliverables will be provided at the start of the subproject implementation.

Meetings

#	Name	Description	Date
M1	Kick-off meeting	A compulsory meeting to get to know the regional demonstrator partners and the rules of the game: governance model, support to be obtained from the dRural partners, contact channels, etc.	M1 – May 2023
M6	Review meeting	During the review, the Subgrantee team members should elaborate their work, answer questions and present their solution to dRural partners.	M7 – November 2023.

6.3. Ethics monitoring process

Complex services

Successful applications will be subject to ethics monitoring during their implementation period.

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The first monitoring step will be addressed through ethics review of the first deliverable. The goal of this ethics review is to ensure that all ethics requirements from the original Ethics Screening process have been adequately addressed.

If the screening process resulted in requirements that were not fully addressed during the contract preparation and signing phase, or if it resulted in requirements that specifically required monitoring during implementation, dRural ethics partners will provide ad hoc monitoring to verify that requirements are adequately addressed. It will be the responsibility of the subgrantees to provide any information required to assess the actions taken to address the ethics requirements. The monitoring at this stage is reported on the Ethics and Data Protection Monitoring form 1 (Complex Service Provider projects).

1. **Handling of ethics and data protection issues.** How effectively were the ethics and data protection issues identified during the screening process handled? (What worked? What didn't? What could have been improved, etc.?)

2. **Additional issues.** Does the first project deliverable suggest that any issues have arisen during implementation that were either not present, or not identified, during the screening process? How were (are) such issues (being) addressed?

3. **Additional requirements.** Are additional ethics and data protection requirements necessary? If so, list them here.

Figure 3 Ethics and Data Protection Monitoring form 1 (Complex Service Provider projects)

Finally, there is an ethics review of the second (final) deliverable submitted by the subgrantee. This cannot result in changes to the implemented project (since it will have finished), but it may result in lessons learned for the dRural project as a whole. The review process for this stage is reported on the Ethics and Data Protection Monitoring form 2 (Complex Service Provider projects).

1. **Handling of ethics and data protection issues.** How effectively were the ethics and data protection issues identified during the screening process and implementation handled? (What worked? What didn't? What could have been improved, etc.?)

2. **Additional issues.** Does the second project deliverable suggest that any issues arose during implementation that were either not present, or not identified, at earlier stages of the project? How were such issues addressed?

3. **Lessons learned.** Reflecting on the project as a whole, from application to implementation to final deliverable, what lessons can be learned for ethics and data protection in dRural?

Figure 4 Ethics and Data Protection Monitoring form 2 (Complex Service Provider projects)

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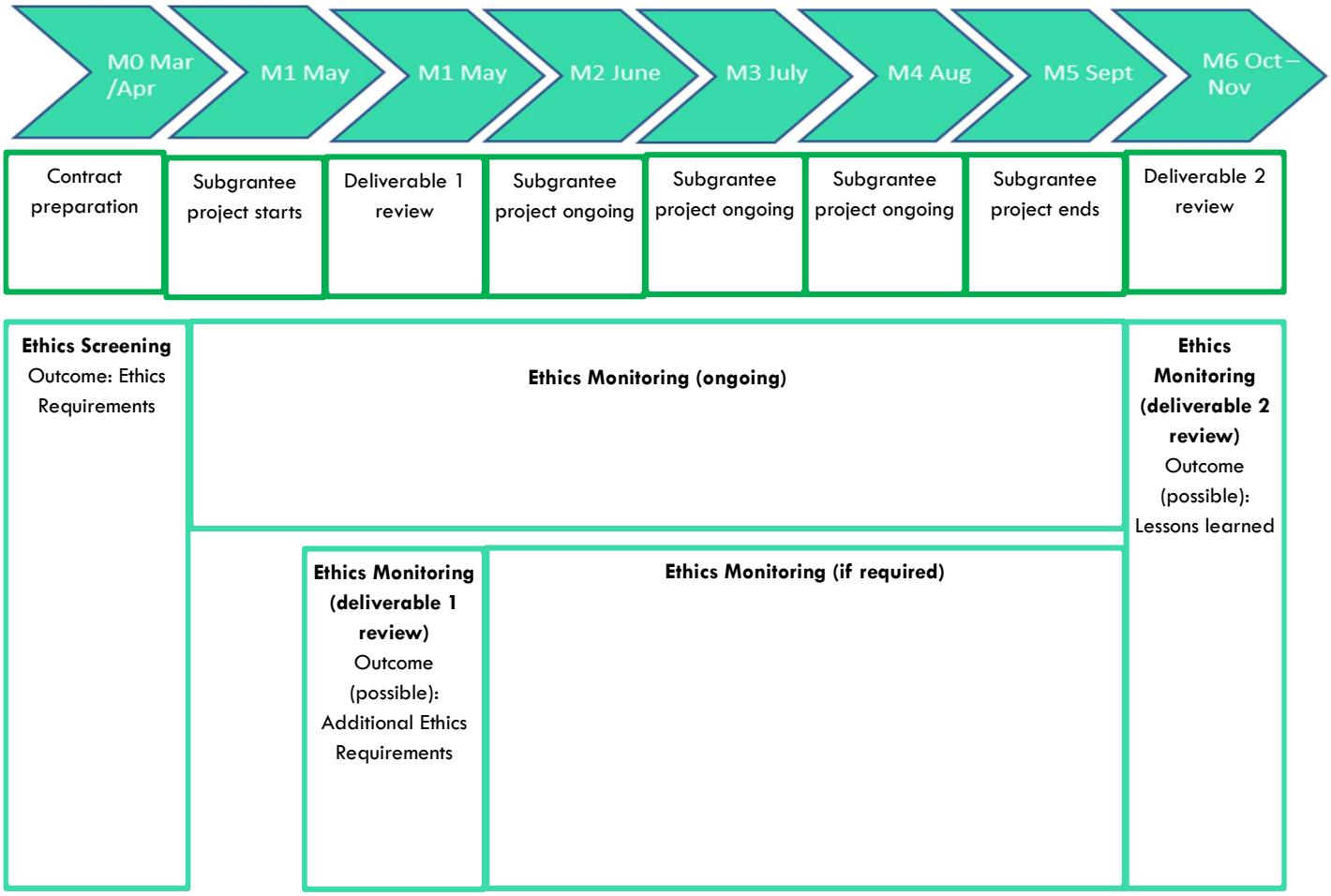

Figure 5 Overall ethics screening and monitoring process for Complex Service Provider projects

The dates mentioned in Section 6 are indicative and will follow the overall timeline of Open Call procedures.

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7. Responsibilities of the Subgrantees

The selected Subgrantees are indirectly beneficiaries of European Commission funding. As such, they are responsible for the proper use of the funding and ensure that the recipients comply with obligations under H2020 specific requirements as described in Horizon 2020 - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) The obligations that are applicable to the recipients include:

7.1. Conflict of interest

The Subgrantee representative must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the subproject is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

They must formally notify to the dRural consortium without delay any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation. The dRural consortium may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

If the Subgrantee representative breaches any of its obligations, the Subgrantee agreement may be automatically terminated. Moreover, if the Subgrantee Agreement is terminated due to a breach made by the Subgrantee, the dRural consortium reserves the right to suspend further payments to the Subgrantee and claim the Subgrantee the full refund of all payments made to the Subgrantee up to date.

7.2. Ethics, Data Protection & Confidentiality

During implementation of the subproject and for five years after the end of the subproject, the parties must keep confidential any data, documents or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential at subcontract signing time ('confidential information').

If a Subgrantee SME requests, the Commission and the dRural consortium may agree to keep such information confidential for an additional period beyond the initial five years. This will be explicitly stated in the Subgrantee Agreement. If information has been identified as confidential during the subproject execution or only orally, it will be considered confidential only if this is accepted by the dRural Coordinator and confirmed in writing within 15 days of the oral disclosure. Unless otherwise agreed between the parties, they may use confidential information only to implement the Agreement.

The Subgrantee representative(s) may disclose confidential information to the dRural consortium and to the selected reviewers, who will be bounded by a specific Non-Disclosure Agreement.

Applicants must confirm that all proposed services, including the means of their delivery and upkeep, have been reviewed to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation on data protection, privacy, and fundamental rights.

The projects are subject to ethics monitoring processes, overseen by dRural partners. However, the responsibility for meeting ethics and data protection requirements rests solely with the applicants in their applications and eventual implementation of their projects (if selected).

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7.3. Promoting the action and giving visibility to the EU funding

The Subgrantees must promote the subproject, the dRural project and its results, by providing the description of their project upon request from the dRural Consortium and highlight the financial support of the EC.

Unless the European Commission or the dRural coordinator requests or agrees otherwise or unless it is impossible, any communication activity related to the action (including in electronic form, via social media, etc.), any publicity, including at a conference or seminar or any type of information or promotional material (brochure, leaflet, poster, presentation etc.), and any infrastructure, equipment and major results funded by the grant must:

(a) display the EU emblem;

(b) display the dRural logo and

(c) include the following text:

> *For communication activities: "This project has indirectly received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under project dRural (grant agreement No 101017304)".*
>
> *For infrastructure, equipment and major results: "This [infrastructure][equipment][insert type of result] is part of a sub-project that has indirectly received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under project dRural (grant agreement No* 101017304*)*

When displayed in association with a logo, the European emblem should be given appropriate prominence. This obligation to use the European emblem in respect of projects to which the EC contributes implies no right of exclusive use. It is subject to general third-party use restrictions which do not permit the appropriation of the emblem, or of any similar trademark or logo, whether by registration or by any other means. Under these conditions, the Subgrantee is exempted from the obligation to obtain prior permission from the EC to use the emblem. Further detailed information on the EU emblem can be found on the Europa web page.

Any publicity made by the Subgrantee SME in respect of the project, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, must specify that it reflects only the author's views and that the EC or dRural consortium are not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

The EC and the dRural consortium shall be authorised to publish, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, the following information:

- the name of the Subgrantee SME;
- contact address of the Subgrantee SME;
- the general purpose of the subproject;
- the amount of the financial contribution foreseen for the subproject; after the final payment, and the amount of the financial contribution actually received;
- the geographic location of the activities carried out;
- the list of dissemination activities and/or of patent (applications) relating to foreground;
- the details/references and the abstracts of scientific publications relating to foreground and, if funded within the subproject, the published version or the final manuscript accepted for publication;
- the publishable reports submitted to dRural;

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- any picture or any audio-visual or web material provided to the EC and dRural in the framework of the subproject.

The Subgrantee SME shall ensure that all necessary authorisations for such publication have been obtained and that the publication of the information by the EC and dRural does not infringe any rights of third parties.

Upon a duly substantiated request by the Subgrantee representative, the dRural consortium, if such permission is provided by the EC, may agree to forego such publicity if disclosure of the information indicated above would risk compromising the beneficiary's security, academic or commercial interests.

7.4. Financial audit and controls

The European Commission (EC) will monitor that dRural beneficiaries and the Subgrantee SMEs comply with the conditions for financial support to third parties such as set out in Annex 1 of the dRural grant agreement and may take any action foreseen by the grant agreement in case of noncompliance vis à vis the beneficiary concerned.

Moreover, the EC may at any time during the implementation of the dRural project and up to 5 (five) years after the end of the dRural project, arrange for financial audits to be carried out, by external auditors, or by the EC services themselves including the European Anti-Fraud office (OLAF). The audit procedure shall be deemed to be initiated on the date of receipt of the relevant letter sent by the EC. Such audits may cover financial, systemic and other aspects (such as accounting and management principles) relating to the proper execution of the grant agreement. They shall be carried out on a confidential basis.

The Subgrantee SME shall make available directly to the EC all detailed information and data that may be requested by the EC or any representative authorised by it, with a view to verifying that the grant agreement is properly managed and performed in accordance with its provisions and that costs have been charged in compliance with it. This information and data must be precise, complete and effective.

The Subgrantee SME shall keep all subproject deliverables and the originals or, in exceptional cases, duly authenticated copies – including electronic copies – of all documents relating to the subproject contract for up to five years from the end of the project. These shall be made available to the EC where requested during any audit under the grant agreement.

In order to carry out these audits, the Subgrantee SME shall ensure that the EC´s services and any external body(ies) authorised by it have on-the-spot access at all reasonable times, notably to the subproject applicant offices, to its computer data, to its accounting data and to all the information needed to carry out those audits, including information on individual salaries of persons involved in the subproject. They shall ensure that the information is readily available on the spot at the moment of the audit and, if so requested, that data be handed over in an appropriate form.

On the basis of the findings made during the financial audit, a provisional report shall be drawn up. It shall be sent by the EC or its authorised representative to the Subgrantee concerned, which may make observations thereon within one month of receiving it. The Commission may decide not to take into account observations conveyed or documents sent after that deadline. The final report shall be sent to the beneficiary concerned within two months of expiry of the aforesaid deadline.

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On the basis of the conclusions of the audit, the EC shall take all appropriate measures which it considers necessary, including the issuing of recovery orders regarding all or part of the payments made by it and the application of any applicable sanction.

The European Court of Auditors shall have the same rights as the EC, notably right of access, for the purpose of checks and audits, without prejudice to its own rules.

In addition, the EC may carry out on-the-spot checks and inspections in accordance with Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/96 of 11 November 1996 concerning on-the-spot checks and inspections carried out by the Commission in order to protect the European Communities' financial interests against fraud and other irregularities.

7.5. Subproject Communication

The Subgrantee representative should:

- Provide any notice be in writing to the dRural consortium;
- Notify immediately any change of persons or contact details to the dRural coordinator. The address list shall be accessible to all concerned.

7.6. Originality of the sub-granted projects

It is required that applications submitted are based on original works by the applicants and that their foreseen developments are free from third party rights. dRural consortium is not obliged to verify the authenticity of the ownership of the foreseen products/ services. Any issues delivered from third party claims that arise a result of the sub-granted projects are on the sole responsibility of the applicant.

7.7. IPR Ownership of the sub-granted projects

Each Subgrantee that generates results owns the attached Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) generated during the development process and will own results that are not IPRs. Each contractor is responsible for the management and protection of its IPRs and bears the costs associated with this.

The Subgrantees funded within dRural project will be the unique owners of the technologies created within the framework of their sub-granted projects. Parts of their works will be requested to be public for dRural dissemination purposes.

7.8. Liability

dRural consortium and the European Commision cannot be held liable for any acts or omission of the applicant in relation to the selected sub-granted project implemented by the Subgrantee. The dRural consortium shall not be liable for any defaults of any products, processes or services created in the sub-granted project. Including, for instance, anomalies in the functioning or performance thereof.

In case any damage is caused to a third party by the Subgrantee, the Subgrantee will assume full responsibility for the damage caused. In no way will the dRural Consortium be responsible for any damages caused by the Subgrantee.

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Subgrantees shall bear sole responsibility for ensuring that their acts within the framework of their sub-granted projects do not infringe third parties right.

7.9. Do Not Significant Harm (DNSH)

Subgrantees must always respect the 'Do Not Significant Harm Principle". The Commission Communication on the European Green Deal introduced the green oath to 'do no harm'. The 'Do not Significant Harm' (DNSH) principle has been further specified in the EU Regulation on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investments, commonly defined as the 'EU Taxonomy Regulation'. Six environmental objectives are listed in Article 913 of the EU Taxonomy and Article 17 specifies what can constitute a 'significant harm' for these objectives. Thus, the regulation provides that no measure should lead to significant harm to any of the six environmental objectives within the meaning of Article 17 of the Taxonomy Regulation.

7.10. Infrastructure costs model

The dRural solution has associated maintenance and infrastructure costs. The dRural project partners will cover such costs during the implementation of the subgrantees' subprojects, at 0 costs for the subgrantees. However, once the implementation of such subprojects come to an end (July 2023 for Simple Service Providers and October 2023 for Complex Service Providers), Subgrantees wishing to maintain their services in dRural must agree on a cost model with the local promoter in each Regional Demonstrator, should that model have any form such as an annual fee or simply continue benefiting from a free-of-charge scheme. In any case, it will remain to be discussed among the relevant parties.

DISCLAIMER: This in no way affects the Open Call procedures and the Open Call evaluation and selection procedures have no connection whatsoever with the upcoming potential obligations around the infrastructure cost model.

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8. Checklist

1. **Does your planned work fit with the call for applications?** Check that your proposed work does indeed address one of the topics open in this call.
2. **Does your application address issues in rural areas?** Check that your proposed work is indeed applicable in rural areas.
3. **Is your application eligible?** The eligibility criteria are given in chapter 3 "Application Eligibility Criteria". In particular, make sure that you satisfy the minimum participation requirements (entity from eligible countries).
4. **Is your application complete?** Have you completed all mandatory questions?
5. **Does your application fulfil questions requests/ comments**? Applications should be precise, concise and must answer to requested questions, which are designed to correspond to the applied evaluation. Omitting requested information will almost certainly lead to lower scores and possible rejection.
6. **Have you maximised your chances?** There will be strong competition. Therefore, edit your application tightly, strengthen or eliminate weak points.
7. **Have you submitted your application before the deadline?** It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the application. Failure of the application to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the message as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.
8. **Have you provided the necessary annexes?**
9. **Do you need further advice and support?** You are strongly advised to communicate with the dRural team via the F6S platform.
10. **If you propose a Complex Service, are you integrating an external existing data platform with dRural?**

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9. Contacts

The dRural consortium will provide information to the applicants only via the F6S blog, so that the information (question and answer), will be visible to all participants.

More info at: www.drural.eu

Apply via: www.f6s.com/drural-complex-service-providers-oc/apply

F6S support team: support@f6s.com

Online Q&A: www.f6s.com/drural-complex-service-providers-oc/discuss

For extraordinary communication need, please contact the dRural team at: druralopencalls@foodscalehub.com.

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