



dRural

Annex 2: Open Call Guidelines for Mirror Regions



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1. Introduction

This document provides guidance information regarding the dRural Open Call for mirror regions, as well as the open call rules that encompass the eligibility and evaluation criteria, funding distribution and payment schema. Including this document, all associated Annexes must be read carefully for the submission of an application.

The dRural background information and goals are described in Annex 1 – Open Call Text for Mirror Regions.



2. Open Call for Mirror Regions Overview

dRural will provide economic grants (up to € 120,000 each) together with access to dRural technology platform, training, and the exchange of best practices and lessons learned (Table 1). The most important stakeholders, the needs and assets of the region, the range of entrepreneurs, etc., will be analysed following the ecosystem building outcomes. This will give a first idea concerning which business model template to apply first in each mirror region to benefit the region and its population. Also developing both existing and new business ideas according to the possibilities that occur with dRural.

To ensure replication potential and successful, sustainable and useful services for regions, the dRural solution has been designed with an emphasis on the following competitive advantages:

- **Business-wise:** Sustaining digital entrepreneurship and economic development of rural areas; Cost-effective; short-term and proved ROI in rural regions.
- **Marketing-wise:** Users' and citizens' centric - built and tested with rural demo-regions; enabling improvement in residents' quality of life; improving attractiveness of rural areas
- **Operational:** User friendly interfaces; easy to deploy/replicate; easy to upgrade with new services and technology features.
- **Technical:** Integrated and interoperable; based on open standards; flexible and scalable (based on agile development); low maintenance and cost of ownership (cloud based).
- **Human capital:** Drives development of new skills; enabling changing behaviours; creating a favourable environment for young talents (SMEs, start-ups...); driving democratisation and trust.

2.1. What is a mirror region?

A mirror region is a region outside the consortium, that will replicate (mirror) dRural platform in their own geographies. In this project, a mirror region will be represented by public or private entities (local promoters, local associations, local innovation hub, NGOs, chamber of commerce, non-profit foundations, municipalities, cities halls, SMEs, etc.) that will play the role of a regional promoter to provide rural services to region or improve to current provision of services will be selected through the Open Call for Mirror Regions.

This call aims to recruit and engage key stakeholders from rural regions non-represented within the consortium with the task of deploying dRural solution (platform) in that new region. This will enable the expansion of the dRural concept, demonstrating its benefits and impacts beyond the current consortium coverage. The funding, programme scope and duration are summarized in table 1.



Table 1: Summary: dRural open call for mirror regions scope and benefits

Strands	Work to be done	Number of awarded beneficiaries	Funding granted per provider	Time for implementation
Regional Promoters + SMEs (IT developers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up dRural platform. • Attract complex/simple service providers and end users. • Build the business ecosystem. 	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60.000€ Single application (only regional promoter) • 120.000€ Consortia application Regional Promoters + SMEs (IT developers) 	9 months

2.2. Expected Results

The winning mirror regions through the open call will replicate (develop and customize) the dRural platform. To address it, the regions will receive training and 1to1 coaching at technical- (including internet coverage boosting), business and ecosystem building levels in order to support the deployment of dRural in their geographical areas. They will also receive funding to do a full-scale implementation in their local language, mimicking the process followed by the dRural demonstrator, while avoiding initial pitfalls via best practices, lessons learnt and success stories.

2.3. Type of Support

Each Mirror Region will receive equity-free funding for setting up dRural in their region, including:

- solution customisation and hosting¹
- recruitment of service providers
- marketing actions towards of end users
- process for designing a sustainable business model.

The financial support consists of a lump sum grant amounting €60,000 to fund a regional promoter to replicate (mirror) dRural platform in their own geographies. The proposals are to be deployed along a 9-month period.

Applications of 2 complementary entities (eg. consortia of regional promoter and SME – IT developer) are also accepted and encouraged. In this case their budget can go up to €120,000 (€60,000 each).

¹ Applicants will have to cover directly the cost of hosting part or all the dRural technology solution in AWS infrastructure, with an estimated cost of €600 monthly. Currently, only AWS infrastructure is validated for the Core Meta-platform part of dRural Platform. The marketplace part can run on different deployment models, among them self-hosted, but still AWS is the recommended infrastructure platform for deployment.



In addition, selected regions (represented by a regional promoters and IT developers) will receive two types of support:

- a) **Technical support**, for deploying and customizing dRural Platform, with access to training resources, manuals and related materials. This task will cater for providing assistance to mirror regions to deploy dRural platform. dRural will share with them the necessary methodology, processes for local adaptation and customization, risk and aspects to consider and as well learnt lessons and evaluation results from the previous deployments. Additional material that will be shared will be all needed evaluation templates and the training elaborated material
- b) **Business support**. Business and ecosystem-building coaches will be provided. Workshops and meetups will be deployed to ensure exchange and benchmarking of models to best deploy the dRural concept and create the biggest impact and benefits for the region and its ecosystem. This task will analyse and develop the mirror regions' ecosystems. Using the scheme for business support developed by the consortium, the business model for each mirror region will be developed with stakeholders and partners in the different regions. At least one business model workshop per mirror region will be organised. The dRural platform guidelines will be finetuned based on the mirror regions feedback. Insights from this task will feed into the development of dRural exploitation plan.

2.4. Expected impacts of the Open Call

The **overall goal** of the dRural Open Call for Mirror Regions is to boost the innovation and development of rural regions by stimulating, coordinating and engaging new stakeholders to the dRural project that can provide added-value services to citizens and business in the regional demonstrator and at the same time improve the technical capabilities and technology offer provided by dRural platform.

For this, dRural project has planned an Open Call with the objective of:

- Engaging new external stakeholders into the dRural ecosystem.
- Helping to tune and adjust dRural platform through additional inputs and tests.
- Benefit rural areas (mirror regions) by increasing the services available and meeting the specific needs of rural businesses and rural people. This will create a “networking effect” on the platform, attracting more users and service providers, and maximizing the chances of services sustainability after the project ends.
- Creating new market openings in mirror regions, making it possible for newer and smaller players to enter the market and create value.
- Simplifying future rural solution development for Mirror Regions by bringing together data and analytical functionalities, thus addressing this barrier more completely over time.
- Providing technical requirements to dRural Platform
- Testing and validating dRural Platform in a large variety of real-life scenarios bringing real benefits to stakeholders and general people located in Mirror Regions.

2.5. Funding scheme

The funding from dRural Open Call for Mirror Regions 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 **rural regions** will receive their funding of **60,000€ or 120,000€ in 3 installments**:

- 1st Payment after receiving a positive assessment regarding their first deliverable from the dRural consortium in M1. The payment will be in M2;
- 2nd Payment after complying to M6 milestone (public deployment of at least 15 Simple Services and 1-2 Complex Service);
- 3rd and Final Payment one month after the end of their project in M9, subject to receiving a positive assessment regarding their final deliverable from the dRural consortium. The payment will be in M10.

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

2.6. Timeline – Open Calls for Mirror Regions

Submission to the Open Call for Mirror Regions will be enabled on the 14th of February 2023 at 12:00 PM CET and will end on the 20th of April 2023 at 5:00 PM CET time (Brussels time). Figure 1 presents the indicative timeline during which each phase of the dRural Open Call for Mirror Regions 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 cancel the Open Call at any point due to any unforeseen circumstances.



1 Open Call for Mirror Regions duration Feb 14 2023 – Apr 20 2023			
2	Evaluation of Applications Apr 27 2023 – May 19 2023	5	1 st Payment in M2 after receiving a positive assessment regarding their first deliverable from the dRural consortium;
3	Contracting the winning applicants May 22 2023 – Jun 2 2023	6	2 nd Payment after complying to M6 milestone (public deployment of Simple and Complex Services);
4	Open Call Subproject Deployments Jun 10 2023 – Feb 29 2024	7	3 rd and Final Payment in M10 (one month after the end of their projects).

Figure 1 dRural Open Call for Mirror Regions timeline

2.7. Background information on dRural project and Technical Specification

All the information about the dRural project, approach of the Open Call for Mirror Regions and challenge definition are described in Annex 1: Open Call Text for Mirror Regions



3. Eligibility Criteria

All applicants will have to abide by all general requirements described in this section to be considered eligible for dRural Project.

3.1. Target Applicants

dRural Open Call for Mirror Regions invites **European entities from European Regions** to replicate 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 allowed from single regional promoter and consortia of 2 complementary entities (a regional promoter + SME (IT developer)).

Applicants cannot be affiliated with consortium partners, nor can they be employees of the consortium partners. All potential conflicts of interest will be assessed carefully. Please see more info here: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/protection-eu-budget/conflict-interest_en

3.1.1. Mirror Region

A **mirror region** is defined as a rural area or division especially part of a country or the world having definable characteristics but not always fixed boundaries.

The given rural area or division must be geographically located in Europe or in associated any EU countries (see section 2.4), in a different region to the pilots represented in the dRural project, namely: Extremadura (Spain), Gelderland Midden (the Netherlands), Dubrovnik-Neretva County (Croatia) and Jämtland Härjedalen (Sweden). Different regions from the same countries are eligible to participate.

In such mirror region, there is a **regional promoter** that provides rural services to the rural population (business or citizens). **In this project, regional promoters will implement dRural platform to address the mirror regions' needs in the context of rural services**

3.1.2. Regional promoters

European public or private entities (local promoter, local associations, local innovation hub, NGOs, chamber of commerce, non-profit foundations, municipalities, cities halls, promoters, SMEs, etc.) that provide services to a rural region or intend to improve the current provision of services. **The entities must be based in the Mirror Region.**

The open call will select a single regional promoter that proposes to develop dRural platform in a specific region and develop the solution ecosystem, marketplace, and business model. This entity will be funded with up to 60K Eur.



3.1.3. Consortium (Regional promoter + SME (IT developer))

The call will also select consortia of 2 entities to address dRural solution (a consortium of a regional promoter that will develop the solution ecosystem, marketplace, and business model. The SME that will be responsible for developing the technical aspects of the platform. Only SMEs are eligible to compose the consortium. Consortia will be funded with 120k Eur (60k Eur per organization) .

- *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 Eligible Countries

Only Applicants (mirror regions, regional promoters and SMEs) established in any of the following countries (hereafter collectively identified as the “Eligible Countries”) are eligible:

- The Member States (MS) of the European Union (EU), including their outermost regions
https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/country-profiles_en
- The Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) linked to the Member States
https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/wp/2018-2020/annexes/h2020-wp1820-annexga_en.pdf.
- H2020 associated countries (those which signed an agreement with the Union as identified in Article 7 of the Horizon 2020 Regulation according to the updated list published by the EC):
https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/3cp/h2020-hi-list-ac_en.pdf.
- The UK applicants are eligible under the conditions set by the EC for H2020 participation at the time of the deadline of the call.

3.3 Language

Applications for dRural Open Call must be done in English and 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) and Annex 5 (SME Declaration of Conducting Business). Annex 6 (Bank account form), Annex 7 (Model Subgrantee Agreement Template for Mirror Regions) will only be needed for the **winning region** (regional promoter, SME (IT developer) are also created in English.

The language in which the Subgrantees provide deliverables (reports on the work done in their projects) will be English.



3.2. Documentation format

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

3.3. Applicant Eligibility Criteria

For regions the following grant eligibility criteria include:

- The applicant is a regional promoter located in one of the EU Member States or H2020 Associated Country as defined in H2020 rules for participation.
- The applicant that will compose a consortium is a SME/natural person legally established and based in one of the EU Member States or an H2020 Associated Country as defined in H2020 rules for participation.
- The entities must be based in the European Mirror Region that will replicate dRural Platform and develop a marketplace.
- In case 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 letter is requested in the application form.
- Applicant has not been awarded in previous dRural Open Calls (limitation of €60K per third-party)
- Applicant is not a consortium partner.

3.4. Application Eligibility Criteria

The following application eligibility criteria include:

- Each applicant (regional promoter or a consortium) may submit only one (1) application as a mirror region. 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.
- Awarded companies in the Open Call for Regional Demonstrators are not eligible.
- 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 F&S profiles as applications that will be submitted.
- The maximum amount of direct funding that a Mirror Region can receive in total via the dRural Open Call for Mirror Region is 60,000€. The maximum funding that a consortium can receive is 120,000€



- All individual projects will have to design, develop and publicly deploy at least 15 simple services and 1 Complex Service (see Annex 1- Open Call Text for Mirror Regions for what is a Simple and Complex Service according to dRural terminology). All consortia projects will have to design, develop and publicly deploy at least 15 Simple Services and 2 Complex Services. Commitment for additional Simple and Complex Services in the proposal will be favourably evaluated.
- All projects must plan in their implementation to have fully deployed dRural Platform by M3, their Complex Service(s) and 15 Simple Services by M6 and publicly pilot them during the final 3 months (6 months of piloting for the marketplace).



4. Application Submission

dRural will select 8 Mirror Regions (a single regional promoter or a consortium). All winners of the Open Call need to fulfil the eligibility criteria stated in Section 2. At the time of contracting signature, all applicants must provide: Annex 4 (Declaration of Honour) and Annex 5 (SME Declaration of Conducting Business) only for the SMEs in a consortium.

Winning regional promoter and SMEs must also provide: Annex 6 (Bank account information) and three signed copies of Annex 7 (Subgrantee Agreement for Mirror Regions), which will be given to them upon being declared the winning regions of the Open Call for Mirror Regions. Figure 2 presents the overall open call process during which each relevant phase 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.

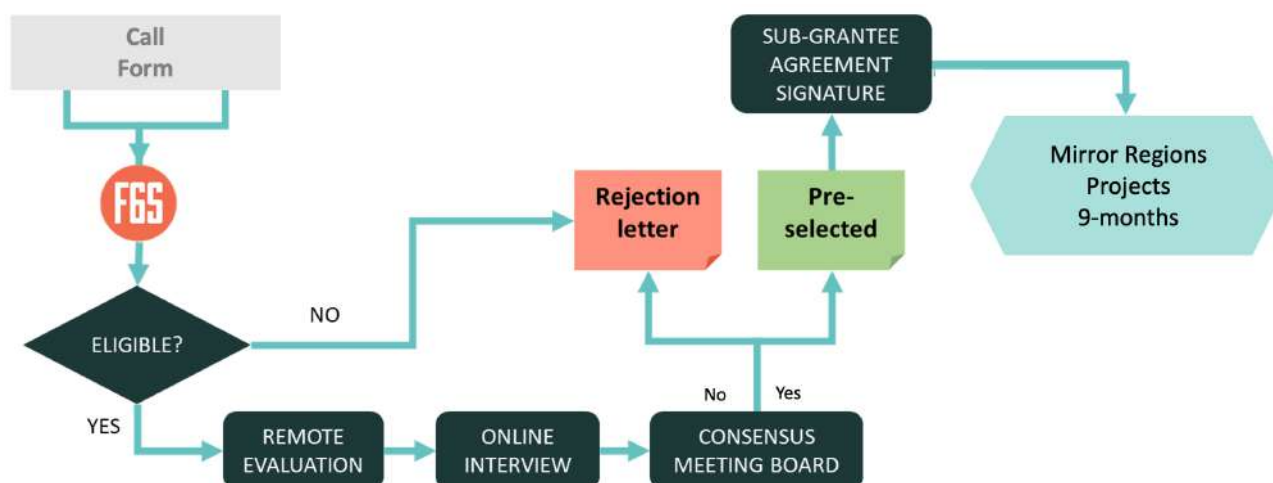


Figure 2 Open Call for Mirror Regions Process

From 14.2.2023 to 20.4.2022 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.

4.1. Open Call Publication

The Open Call for Mirror Regions will be supported by:

- **Annex 1: Open Call Text for Mirror Regions**, that provides information regarding the dRural Project and the Open Call for applicants
- **Annex 2: Open Call Guidelines for Applicants**, that set out the guidelines and the rules for participation in the dRural Open Call for Mirror Regions for applicants. It also includes the eligibility and evaluation criteria.



- **Annex 3: Application Form for Mirror Regions**, application form available at www.f6s.com/drural-mirror-regions-oc, 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 entity's legal representative. The winning regions will sign this document if selected.
- **Annex 5: Declaration of Conducting Business***, which evaluates the status of the entity applying for the Open Call for Mirror Regions. In consortia, the winning SME (IT Developer) will sign this document if selected.
- **Annex 6: Bank Account Information***, which collects information on the applicant's bank account where the dRural payments will be transferred to. The winning regions will sign this document if selected.
- **Annex 7: Model Subgrantee Agreement for Mirror Regions***, that the successful regions will be requested to sign.
- Frequently asked questions & answers published at the community feed (www.f6s.com/drural-mirror-regions-oc/discuss)

*These documents serve as a reference. They will be signed during the contracting phase.

4.2. Means of submission

The F6S platform (www.f6s.com/drural-mirror-regions-oc/apply) will be the entry point for all Applicants' proposal submissions to dRural Open Call for Mirror Regions. Applications received by any other channel will be automatically discarded.

Interested applicants should register at the F6S page (www.f6s.com/drural-mirror-regions-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 Mirror will also be visible at the dRural website, as well as the EC website.

Documents required in subsequent stages will be sent to the dRural partners managing the Open Call for Mirror Regions at: druralproject@f6s.com

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-mirror-regions-oc. Applicants must submit all requested documents on this website as well.
2. 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).
3. In case applicants have any technical difficulties, they should contact the F6S support team at support@f6s.com, cc'ing the dRural team mail druralproject@f6s.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 at www.f6s.com/drural-mirror-regions-oc. 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 April 20th 2023.



5. Evaluation process and evaluation criteria

5.1. Procedures for regions to enter the dRural Open Call for Mirror Regions

Step 1: Eligibility check

After the Open Call for Mirror 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 consortium is composed by an SME (IT developer) and a regional promoter as defined in section in section “3.1 Target Applicants” [Y/N]
- The applicant aims to replicate the dRural Solution and receive support to exploit the outcomes, measure the impacts, among others [Y/N]
- Is the participation rule as expressed in section “2.4 Application Eligibility Criteria” followed [Y/N]
- Is the application written in English [Y/N]?

The eligibility check will be carried out by dRural partner managing the Open Call, F6S.

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 consortium experts (one business expert and one technical expert).



Applications will be scored based on the following evaluation criteria:

Table 2: dRural Evaluation Criteria elaboration for Mirror Regions

Criteria	Description
Criterion 1: Alignment	<p>Extent to which the proposal is aligned with the dRural project in general, and more specifically with dRural Open Call for Mirror Regions' objectives and requirements, as described in Annex 1: Open Call Text for Mirror Regions.</p> <p>Extent to which the proposal solves a rural need identified and addressing it is significant for the relevant stakeholders, providing specific value and being different from competition.</p>
Criterion 2: Excellence	<p>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 proposal 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 solution development and what is their ambition to do it with dRural support.</p> <p>Single applicants should expose and plan for development and deployment of at least 15 Simple Services and 1 Complex Service. Consortium applicants should deliver at least 15 Simple Services and 2 Complex Services. Additional services will be evaluated favourably.</p>
Criterion 3: Impact	<p>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.</p> <p>Strength of the marketing strategy and plan to reach customers.</p> <p>Credibility of the applicant's strategy to exploit the dRural platform beyond the dRural open call period and that there is a real interest in the exploitation of the results once the project ends</p>
Criterion 4: Implementation	<p>Extent to which the work plan is complete and coherent to ensure an effective implementation. Soundness of the approach.</p> <p>All projects must include in their implementation plan and commit to the following milestones:</p> <p>M1: Concrete plan for deployment, hosting infrastructure committed;</p> <p>M3: dRural Platform (Marketplace + Core Meta-platform) fully deployed;</p> <p>M6: Simple and Complex Service(s) fully developed and publicly deployed.</p> <p>M9: Implementation Report including key KPI's on the number of engaged users, income generated, number of Simple Services in the Marketplace, number of Complex services deployed, number of users of the complex services, etc.</p>
Criterion 5: Team	<p>Appropriateness of the team to meet the dRural challenge. Technical capacity, experience, excellence, and quality of the team.</p>



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 criteria will be three (3).

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

F6S, as the dRural partner managing the Open Call for Mirror Regions 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 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).

Every additional Complex Service committed over the minimum, will get 0.5 additional marks in the final evaluation results. Payments will be always linked to all committed Simple and Complex Services being properly implemented and publicly made.



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 funding, 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 proposed service and its implementation.

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 evaluators 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 open call managers. 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 inadvisable to fund it, a Consensus meeting will be organised to make a final decision.

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

At the end of this process, **8 applying Mirror Regions** will be selected and **three applicants** will remain on the **reserve list**, in case some winners fail to submit the necessary documentation before the end of the deadline.

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 score for each criterion, overall score and brief comments from both the evaluation and the ethics and data protection screening process, if their application was subject to this screening process.



Redress procedure

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 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. When sending the request for redress the sender must include the dRural Open Call team in the list of recipients via the following mail: **druralproject@f6s.com**

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.
- 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.

In this case, **the review committee** (TICBIOMED as the Project Coordinator, WP5 core partners (F6S and FSH) 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.
- 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 (IT developer in a consortium), 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.

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 region.



6. Subproject Execution Summary

6.1. Support provided to subgrantees

The winning region 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 region 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

Each of the winning regions' projects will go through the following processes.

Evaluation & payment

Step 1			
When	Applications evaluation	Estimated month	April-May 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	July 2023 (M2).
Mean	Review of the submitted first deliverable		
If successful	The Subgrantee receives the first instalment of the financing for 30% of the grant		
Step 3			
When	M6 milestone met	Estimated month	November 2023 (M6).
Mean	The Subgrantee will provide a report with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deployment summary of the dRural platform in M3, how many users and 15 Simple Services by M6; - Design, development and deployment summary of their Complex Service(s) ready in M6 		
If successful	The Subgrantee receives the second instalment of the financing for 40% of the grant		
Step 3			
When	Upon the end of the project implementation	Estimated month	February 2024 (M9).



Mean	Review of the submitted Final deliverable report. It must contain the following KPI information (a template will be provided): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of users in the marketplace, evolution, MAU, retention, churn rate; - Number of Simple Services in the marketplace, generated revenue; - Number of Complex Services in the platform, number of users of them, generated revenue, - etc.
If successful	The Subgrantee receives the final instalment of the financing for the 30% pending of the grant

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.

Deliverables

#	Name	Description	Due date
D1	Platform replication definition and development plan	A report describing: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) A detailed description of the solution design. (2) A detailed work plan for its development and implementation to meet the project milestones, especially for the Simple and Complex Service (3) KPI to be measured at the project end (4) incorporating the comments received from the evaluators and dRural partners. 	M1 30.06.2023
D2	Mirror Region Implementation Mid Term report	A report describing: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Deployment summary of the dRural platform: Marketplace and Core Meta-platform; (2) Report on the 15 Simple and 1/2 Complex Service(s) design, development and deployment 	M6 30.11.2023
D3	Mirror Region Outcome Report	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) KPI achieved results (2) the results of the implemented activities: marketplace, service offerings, market traction achieved, impacts in the region, business models, etc. (3) The sustainability strategy of the marketplace (post-project) including business model 	M9 29.2.2024



(*) 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 region and/or consortium and the rules of the game: governance model, support to be obtained from the dRural partners, contact channels, etc.	M1 – June 2023
M9	Review meeting	During the review, the Subgrantee team members should elaborate their work, answer questions and present their solution to dRural partners.	M9 – February 2024

6.3. Milestones

All individual projects will have to design, develop and publicly deploy **at least 1 Complex Service and 15 Simple Services** (see in Annex 1 – Open Call Text for Mirror Regions the definition of Simple and Complex Service according to dRural terminology).

All consortia projects will have to design, develop and publicly deploy **at least 2 Complex Services and 15 Simple Services**. Commitment for additional Simple and Complex Services in the proposal will be favourably evaluated.

All projects will be required to have fully deployed **dRural Platform by M3, their 15 Simple and 1 Complex Service(s) by M6. 15 Simple Services and 1 or 2 Complex Services (consortia) and publicly pilot them during the final 3 months (6 months of piloting for the marketplace) in M9.**

Compliance with some relevant KPIs like number of engaged users, number of simple and complex services developed, amount of conducted business generated in the marketplace will have to be demonstrated for successful evaluation. The KPIs will be detailed and informed in the deployment phase.



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 solution, 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).



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 region or consortium 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 Region or consortium;
- contact address of the Subgrantee Region or consortium;
- 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;



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

The Subgrantee region or consortium 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 region or consortium 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 region or consortium 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 region or consortium 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.



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 Commission 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.



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. 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 Mirror Regions, are provided for reference and will only be requested if the region 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.

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.

7.10. 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 7), 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

7.11. 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.



7.12. Infrastructure costs model

Applicants will have to cover directly from the received funding the cost of hosting part or all the dRural technology solution in AWS infrastructure, with an estimated cost of €600 monthly. Currently, only AWS infrastructure is validated for the Core Meta-platform part of dRural Platform. The marketplace part can run on different deployment models, among them self-hosted, but still AWS is the recommended infrastructure platform for deployment and the one that will be directly catered for by the dRural technical team.

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.



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 2 “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. Do you need further advice and support?** You are strongly advised to communicate with the dRural team via the F6S platform.



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-mirror-regions-oc/apply

F6S support team: support@f6s.com

Online Q&A: www.f6s.com/drural-mirror-regions-oc/discuss

For extraordinary communication need, please contact the dRural team at: druralproject@f6s.com

