D3.1 Selection criteria for SME recruitment to the programme

Project: Boosting innovation agencies for bioeconomy value chains

Acronym: BIO-Boost

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Contents

1 Context

This document is deliverable 3.1. from Work Package 3 – Cross-border SME support, Task 3.1 Recruitment and assessment of SMEs and start-ups.

WP3 aims to strengthen the capacity of the innovation agencies involved, to provide high-quality, professional innovation support services to SMEs, testing their learning in a controlled environment, while simultaneously benefitting participating SMEs.

This is a public deliverable developed by Lithuanian Innovation Centre with the contribution of all partners.

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2 Introduction

To develop cross-border relationships more rapidly between partners and client SMEs, the BIO-Boost partnership is developing and will offer cross-border key account management (KAM) services, mutually supporting each other's clients. KAM is an approach that focuses on building strong, long-term relationships with a company's most important customers, or "key accounts."

The KAM approach involves a dedicated team of account managers (1-2 people per partner) who work closely with key accounts to understand their needs, identify opportunities for growth and collaborate on developing customized solutions to meet those needs. The KAM role will nurture the relationship with key clients, and help the SME develop and grow over time.

Selecting companies that will be served as key accounts is an important decision that should be based on several, clearly defined factors. KAM services should be targeted to relevant SMEs with international potential, that operate in a high-growth sector (preferably bioeconomy industry), have the potential to drive future growth and have a strong potential for building long-term relationship with the key account manager.

It is expected that the KAM will have a good understanding of the company's short and long-term goals and would help to build a strategy to achieve this. And if the KAM

cannot resolve the company's problems, they can identify relevant internal and external support actors (a KAM from another organization) and bring them into the dialogue.

Selecting the right key accounts is important because it allows the network to focus its resources and efforts on its most valuable clients. This document is designed to provide KAMs with a guide on criteria to select key accounts for KAM services. By following a structured approach to selecting key accounts, BIO-Boost partners can identify those clients that are the most strategically aligned and have the greatest potential for growth.

The following sections will provide an overview of each of these criteria. By following the guidance provided in this document, KAMs can build strong, long-term relationships with their key accounts, and drive their growth.

3 Selection criteria for KAM services

3.1 Sectorial approach

BIO-Boost will prioritize small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are directly working on bioeconomy sectors such as forestry and feed (explicit list below). This includes companies that produce bio-based products or services, as well as those involved in the sustainable management of natural resources.

- Agro-industries, forestry
- Aquaculture, algae
- Food, feed, nutrition

BIO-Boost also consider companies that use bioeconomy outputs, such as agricultural residues, wood waste, or other bio-based raw materials, as feedstock for their products or services. This includes companies that produce biofuels, bioplastics, bio-based chemicals, or other bio-based materials.

- Biofuels, bioenergy
- Polymers, materials
- Home and personal care
- Adhesives, coatings
- Bio-based chemicals, bulk, intermediaries, specialties
- Waste-streams, side-streams

BIO-Boost will also assess companies that have the potential to improve technologies or processes in the bioeconomy industry. This includes companies that are developing new methods for producing bio-based products or services, or that are exploring new applications for bio-based materials.

- Automation, AI, Technology development, process development, other.

3.2 Solution orientation

This is a criteria that evaluates whether a company is primarily focused on adopting solutions developed by other companies or providing its own solutions to address business challenges. There are two main target groups related to this criterion:

- The primary target group is companies aiming for green growth and circular bio-solutions. These include the so-called "**solution adopters**" – large, well-established companies working in an international context, and looking to change their business towards greater sustainability.

- The second target group is the "**solution providers**", which will typically include a variety of SME, start-ups, individual innovators, students and others, from different sectors.

3.3 Regional fit

This criterion evaluates the extent to which a potential key account is located in a region that aligns with the KAM's strategic objectives and capabilities. The cross-border KAM services will be offered to the legal entity established and based in one of the EU Member States or a Horizon Europe Associated country as defined in Horizon Europe rules for participation.

3.4   Capability and Commitment

This criterion will help to identify key accounts that have the necessary capabilities and commitment to effectively collaborate with the KAM team and drive long-term success. It can be broken down into sub-criteria that assess the potential key account's:

- **Team**

Compilation of an appropriate team, able and committed to realise the project from an end-user, business, technological and extended stakeholder perspective.

- **Financial and management capacity**

The key account should have financial stability and management capacity to start and implement innovation projects and partnerships.

- **Commitment and organisational capacity**

BIO-Boost will consider the level of commitment and stakeholder engagement of each implementer and adopter, including their ability to engage with stakeholders and ensure their needs and requirements are met, their willingness to invest time and resources in the project, and their overall level of enthusiasm and support for the solution.

3.5   Innovation and Growth

This criterion will help to identify companies that have a strong focus on innovation and collaboration, which can help to drive long-term growth and success for both parties involved.

- **Technology readiness level**

BIO-Boost will evaluate the technology readiness level (TRL) of each solution provider and prioritize solutions that have already been demonstrated at a relevant scale and have a high TRL (at least 6-7 TRL), as these are more likely to be successful in the market. Also, we evaluate the performance and reliability of each solution, including its ability to deliver the desired outcomes.

- **Scalability and growth potential**

BIO-Boost will consider the scalability and growth potential of each company, including their ability to expand their operations and market share, and their potential for generating long-term economic and social benefits.

- **Collaboration potential**

BIO-Boost will assess the potential for collaboration between SMEs, as well as the potential for collaboration with project partners and other stakeholders, in order to build networks, share knowledge, and enhance the impact of project interventions.

3.6   Alignment and fit with the Services portfolio

BIO-Boost aims to identify SMEs that are most in need of project support, and that have the potential to generate significant impact on the bioeconomy sector. We will assess the relevance of each SME's challenges to the goals of the project, including the potential impact of addressing these challenges

on the wider bioeconomy sector, and the alignment with project objectives and key performance indicators.

We will assess the level of resources required to support each SME, this includes the feasibility of providing support in these pre-selected areas. Type of innovation services offered by BIO-Boost:

Ecosystem:

- Community building
- Strategy development
- Ecosystem learning
- Project development
- Lobbying

Technology:

- Technical support on scale-up
- Provision of technology infrastructure
- Testing and validation
- Technology transfer

Business:

- Incubator / Accelerator support
- Partner search
- Access to finance
- Skills and Education
- Business model innovation
- Living Lab

Twin transition:

- Digital audits
- Sustainability audits
- Sustainability strategy development
- EU taxonomy consulting

Internationalisation:

- Networking & Events
- EU Funds and services
- Project preparation services

4 Methodology to select SMEs

The selection process for SMEs will be carried out through various channels to ensure a diverse and high-quality pool of candidates. The first channel will be an open call posted on the official project website, which will allow SMEs to register their interest by filling out a registration form. The registration form will include questions related to the company's industry, products/services, and business goals.

Additionally, project partners will actively seek out potential SME candidates by attending thematic events, trade shows, and other relevant occasions. SMEs identified by partners will be approached directly and invited to complete the registration form.

Once SMEs express interest in the program by submitting the registration form, their information will be carefully reviewed and evaluated based on the pre-determined criteria. Ultimately, the selection process will be based on the objective evaluation of the SMEs' potential for success and their alignment with the project's objectives, as well as their ability to benefit from the support provided by the KAM program. The final selection of SMEs will be made by a project committee consisting of experts and representatives from the consortium partners to ensure a fair and transparent selection process.

All the aforementioned criteria will be evaluated using a standard questionnaire that is provided in the annex of this document. The questionnaire is designed to assess the potential key account's fit with the KAM team's capabilities and service offerings, as well as their ability to drive long-term growth and success. The questionnaire is broken down into several sections, each of which corresponds to one of the criteria outlined in this document. By completing the questionnaire, KAMs can gain a better understanding of the potential key account's needs and objectives, service requirements, innovation and collaboration potential, as well as their compatibility with the KAM team. This can help to ensure that the KAM team is able to provide high-quality services that meet the needs of the key account, which can ultimately lead to long-term success and growth for both parties involved.

After this initial screening, eligible SMEs will be invited to participate in further evaluations, such as a face-to-face interview to assess their fit with the project goals and services provided by the KAM program.

Annex 1 Questionnaire to select SMEs

1. General Information

Name, Surname:	
Organization Name:	
Role:	
Country:	
Website:	
Email:	Telephone Number:
SME status (Yes/No):	

2. Sector

Which bioeconomy sector do you represent?

☐ Agro-industries, forestry

☐ Aquaculture, algae

☐ Food, feed, nutrition

☐ Biofuels, bioenergy

☐ Polymers, materials

☐ home and personal care

☐ Adhesives, coatings

☐ Bio-based chemicals, bulk, intermediaries, specialities

☐ Waste-streams, side-streams

☐ Automation, AI, Technology development, process development

☐ Other (please specify below)

3. Solution orientation

Your company is:

☐ Looking for product/service/technology

☐ Offering product/service/technology

4. Capability and commitment

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Capability and commitment					
1. Our team has a track record of successfully implementing innovative projects and initiatives.					
2. We have the necessary resources and capabilities to support collaborative innovation projects with the KAM team					
3. Our organization is committed to working closely with the KAM team and investing the necessary resources to achieve our shared goals					

5. **Innovation and Growth**

Statement	Very High	High	Neutral	Low	Very Low
Innovation and growth					
1. To what extent do you see your organization as having potential for growth and expansion?					
2. How open is your organization to collaboration with external partners or other organizations to achieve innovation and growth?					
3. How would you rate your organization's ability to successfully bring new products or technologies to market?					

6. **Select areas you can use support in.**

Ecosystem:

☐ Community building

☐ Strategy development

☐ Ecosystem learning

☐ Project development

☐ lobbying

Technology:

☐ Technical support on scale-up

☐ Provision of technology infrastructure

☐ Testing and validation

☐ Technology transfer

Business:

☐ Incubator / accelerator support

☐ Partner search

☐ Access to finance

☐ Skills and education

☐ Business model innovation

☐ Living Lab

Twin transition:

☐ Digital audits

☐ Sustainability audits

☐ Sustainability strategy development

Internationalisation:

☐ Networking & Events

☐ EU Funds and services

☐ Project preparation services

☐ You provide a consent for use of the above for internal communication and storage of the data within this form. All data (comments, personal and company info on this form), will be stored by the "BIO-Boost" project consortia. By completing this form you declare that you have read and accepted the Privacy Policy (https://horizoneurope.eu/pages/privacy.php) and you authorize the "BIO-boost" consortia to process your personal data. By completing this form you confirm that all information that you provided to us on the Registration Form is true, correct and complete.