INCUB8

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

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1. Introduction to Incub8

1.1. About the Programme

Incub8: National University Incubation Programme is a nationwide initiative designed to support early-stage startups and strengthen university-driven entrepreneurship across Ukraine.

Through a network of university startup hubs in **10 regions of Ukraine**, Incub8 connects entrepreneurs with experienced mentors, industry experts, investors, and international innovation networks.

The programme supports pre-seed and seed-stage startups in seven priority sectors: **AI, DeepTech, GreenTech, BioTech, MedTech, EdTech, and AeroSpace**.

Incub8 welcomes entrepreneurs from both academic and non-academic backgrounds, with particular attention to regional innovation ecosystems and inclusive entrepreneurship.

Incub8 is implemented by:

Home of Startups Accelerator (HOSA) - Lead Applicant and Programme Coordinator.

HOSA is responsible for the overall coordination and implementation of Incub8, including programme management, startup selection, incubation delivery, mentoring coordination, and organisation of key events.

Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University - Consortium Partner.

Zhytomyr Polytechnic contributes academic expertise and leads educational and institutional capacity-building activities, including the Training of Trainers programme, technology transfer, and IPR support.

European Business and Innovation Centre Network (EBN) - Associated Partner.

EBN supports the international dimension of Incub8 by facilitating access to European innovation networks, international experts, mentors, investors, and acceleration opportunities.

The programme is delivered in cooperation with university startup schools serving as regional innovation hubs across Ukraine.

Incub8 is supported through the EU4Innovation East framework, with funding provided through Expertise France.

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1.2. Programme Objectives and Opportunities

Over its 12-month implementation period, Incub8 will:

- Select 70 pre-seed and seed-stage startups and entrepreneurs through a competitive national open call.
- Deliver a structured 6-month incubation programme across 10 regional university hubs.
- Train 70 university staff and faculty members through a dedicated Training of Trainers (ToT) programme.
- Strengthen technology transfer and intellectual property rights (IPR) support mechanisms within participating universities.
- Facilitate connections between startups, investors, industry representatives, and mentors through a National Matchmaking Forum.
- Select 20 outstanding startups to participate in the National Pitch Day.
- Award 3 sub-grants of up to €10,000 each to the most promising startups, including at least one women-led startup.
- Connect Ukrainian entrepreneurs with European innovation ecosystems through the International Tech Bridges component.
- Facilitate participation of sub-grant winners in the EBN Annual Congress.
- Develop five open-access methodological publications supporting the long-term sustainability of university startup ecosystems.

Incub8 aims not only to support individual startups but also to create a sustainable model of university-driven entrepreneurship that can continue generating opportunities beyond the project duration.

1.3. Programme Structure and Key Figures

Incub8 provides a structured pathway from early-stage business development to investment readiness.

The programme follows the principle:

70 Startups → 6-Month Incubation → 20 Pitch Day Finalists → 3 Sub-Grant Recipients

Programme Component	Description
Participating startups	70 pre-seed and seed-stage startups
Geographical coverage	10 regions of Ukraine
Regional hubs	10 university-based startup schools

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Programme Component	Description
Incubation duration	6 months
Programme format	Hybrid
Training and mentoring	Core curriculum, sector-specific sessions, individual and group mentoring
National Matchmaking Forum	Networking and matchmaking with investors, industry partners, and innovation organisations
National Pitch Day	20 selected startups present their solutions to an independent expert jury
Financial support	3 sub-grants of up to EUR 10,000 each
Gender inclusion	At least one sub-grant awarded to a women-led startup
International opportunities	Access to international expertise, networks, and relevant ecosystem activities

All 70 selected startups are expected to participate in the full six-month incubation programme.

Following an Investment Readiness Assessment, 20 startups will be selected to participate in the National Pitch Day. Selection as a finalist does not affect the programme completion opportunities of the remaining participants.

At the National Pitch Day, three startups will be selected to receive financial support of up to EUR 10,000 each, subject to the applicable sub-granting rules and procedures.

1.4. Geographical Coverage

Incub8 is implemented through a network of 10 university-based regional hubs located across Ukraine. The programme covers the following regions:

1. Chernihiv Oblast
2. Dnipropetrovsk Oblast
3. Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast
4. Kharkiv Oblast (2 representatives)
5. Lviv Oblast
6. Odesa Oblast
7. Vinnytsia Oblast

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8. Volyn Oblast
9. Zaporizhzhia Oblast

Participating universities serve as regional incubation hubs, providing access to programme activities, local coordination, mentoring, and relevant innovation ecosystem resources.

The programme combines regional delivery with national-level activities and international expert involvement.

1.5. Priority Sectors

Incub8 supports innovative startups operating in the following seven priority sectors:

Sector	Focus Areas
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	AI-powered solutions, machine learning, data-driven technologies, intelligent automation
DeepTech	Science-based innovations, advanced technologies, research commercialisation, breakthrough technological solutions
GreenTech	Environmental technologies, clean energy, circular economy, resource efficiency, sustainability solutions
BioTech	Biotechnology, life sciences, bio-based innovations, research-driven biological technologies
MedTech	Medical technologies, digital health, healthcare innovation, medical devices, healthcare solutions
EdTech	Educational technologies, digital learning solutions, innovative teaching and learning tools
AeroSpace	Aerospace technologies, advanced engineering, aviation and space-related innovations

The programme combines a common entrepreneurial curriculum with sector-specific training, mentoring, and expert support.

Startups will receive support adapted to their technology, development stage, business model, and sector-specific needs.

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1.6. Six-Month Incubation Journey

The Incub8 programme is structured around six interconnected stages.

Stage	Period	Main Focus
DISCOVER	Month 1	Problem identification and customer discovery
VALIDATE	Month 2	Solution validation and business model development
BUILD	Month 3	MVP, prototype, and technology development
SELL	Month 4	Go-to-market strategy, sales, and commercial validation
SCALE	Month 5	Financial planning, business scalability, and investment readiness
PITCH	Month 6	Investor engagement, pitching, and programme completion

Throughout the programme, participants will benefit from structured training, individual and group mentoring, practical assignments, sector-specific expertise, and networking opportunities.

The programme follows a milestone-based approach, encouraging startups to demonstrate measurable progress through customer research, product validation, commercial development, and investment preparation.

A detailed description of the incubation programme is provided in **Section 6 of this Guide**.

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2. OPEN CALL OVERVIEW

2.1. Purpose of the Open Call

The Incub8 Open Call aims to identify and select 70 pre-seed and seed-stage startups from Ukraine to participate in a structured six-month national university incubation programme.

The Open Call seeks innovative startup teams with the potential to develop commercially viable products, services or technologies and contribute to the growth of Ukraine's innovation ecosystem.

Selected applicants will gain access to entrepreneurship training, mentoring, sector-specific expertise, technology transfer and intellectual property rights (IPR) support, as well as opportunities to connect with investors, industry partners and international innovation networks.

The Open Call is designed to support startups at different stages of early development, including teams working on validating their business ideas, developing prototypes, testing products and preparing for market entry.

Participation in the incubation programme does not automatically entitle a startup to receive financial support. Sub-grants will be awarded through a separate competitive selection process at the National Pitch Day, as described in Section 7 of this Guide.

2.2. Who Is the Open Call For?

The Incub8 Open Call targets early-stage startups and entrepreneurial teams developing innovative solutions with market potential.

The programme particularly welcomes applications from:

- Pre-seed and seed-stage startups;
- University-based startup teams and academic spin-offs;
- Researchers and entrepreneurs seeking to commercialise innovative technologies;
- Startups developing technology-driven products or services;
- Women-led, veteran-led and internally displaced person (IDP)-led startup teams.

Applicants are expected to demonstrate a clear entrepreneurial ambition, commitment to developing their startup and willingness to participate actively in the six-month incubation programme.

The detailed eligibility requirements are provided in **Section 3 - Eligibility Criteria**.

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2.3. What Does the Programme Offer?

Selected startups will receive access to a comprehensive incubation programme combining practical training, mentoring, business development and networking opportunities.

Support Component	Description
Six-Month Incubation Programme	Structured training covering business validation, product development, market entry, financial planning and investment readiness.
Individual and Group Mentoring	Regular support from experienced startup mentors, university experts and industry practitioners.
Sector-Specific Expertise	Specialised mentoring and training tailored to the startup's sector and development needs.
Technology Transfer and IPR Support	Guidance on intellectual property protection, research commercialisation and technology transfer.
Startup Development Activities	Practical workshops, execution labs, milestone reviews and startup development assignments.
National Matchmaking Forum	Opportunities to connect with investors, corporations, industry representatives and innovation organisations.
International Networking	Access to international experts, mentors, accelerators and relevant European innovation networks.
Investment Readiness Support	Preparation for investor engagement, fundraising and pitching.
National Pitch Day	Opportunity for 20 selected startups to present their solutions to an independent expert jury.
Financial Support Opportunities	Three sub-grants of up to EUR 10,000 each for selected Pitch Day winners.

The programme follows a practical, milestone-based approach. Participants are expected to apply the knowledge acquired during training to their startups and demonstrate progress throughout the incubation period.

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2.4. Programme Format and Duration

The incubation programme will last **six months** and will be delivered in a **hybrid format**, combining activities organised through participating university startup schools with online sessions involving national and international experts.

The programme includes:

- Core entrepreneurship workshops;
- Startup Execution Labs;
- Individual and group mentoring;
- Sector-specific training and consultations;
- Milestone assessments and progress reviews;
- National and international networking activities;
- Investment readiness and pitching preparation.

Training workshops will generally take place on a weekly or biweekly basis, while mentoring will continue throughout the incubation period.

The programme is structured into six stages:

DISCOVER → VALIDATE → BUILD → SELL → SCALE → PITCH

A detailed description of the curriculum, learning activities and expected outcomes is provided in **Section 6 - Six-Month Incubation Programme**.

2.5. Open Call Timeline

The indicative timeline of the Open Call is presented below.

Stage	Indicative Date
Open Call Launch	03.11.2026
Application Submission Deadline	27.11.2026
Eligibility Check, Application Evaluation, Approval of Initial Training Intake and Notification of Applicants	29-30.11.2026
Onboarding of Selected Startups	30.11-04.12.2026
Start of the Six-Month Incubation Programme	06.12.2026

Applications received after the deadline may be rejected in accordance with the Open Call rules.

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2.6. Application and Selection Process

The selection of startups for the Incub8 incubation programme will be conducted through an open and competitive process. The procedure will consist of the following main stages:

Stage 1 - Application Submission

Applicants submit their applications through the Incub8 application platform within the announced Open Call period.

Stage 2 - Eligibility Check

Submitted applications are reviewed to verify compliance with the eligibility requirements established in this Guide.

Stage 3 - Application Evaluation

Eligible applications are assessed against the published evaluation criteria, including the startup's innovation potential, market opportunity, team capacity and development potential.

Stage 4 - Admission to Initial Training

Based on the evaluation results, startups are admitted to the initial training stage under Section 5.6. The intake may exceed 70; where it does, the core cohort is confirmed through the internal assessment in Section 6.5.

Stage 5 - Notification and Onboarding

Selected applicants are notified of the results via email and receive instructions regarding onboarding, participation requirements and the programme schedule.

The detailed evaluation criteria, scoring methodology and selection procedures are described in **Section 5 - Evaluation and Selection Process**.

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2.7. Participation Costs and Financial Support

Participation in the six-month Incub8 incubation programme is **free of charge** for selected startups. The programme provides access to training, mentoring and relevant support activities without participation fees. However, participation in the incubation programme does not guarantee financial support.

At the end of the programme, 20 selected startups will have the opportunity to compete at the National Pitch Day.

Following the final evaluation, **three startups will be selected to receive sub-grants of up to EUR 10,000 each**, including at least one women-led startup.

The conditions governing financial support, including eligibility, selection, contractual arrangements and applicable requirements, are described in Section 7 of this Guide.

2.8. Equal Opportunities and Inclusion

Incub8 is committed to promoting equal opportunities, diversity and inclusive participation in entrepreneurship. The programme encourages applications from startup teams representing different regions, backgrounds and entrepreneurial experiences.

Particular attention is given to supporting:

- Women-led startups;
- Veteran-led startups;
- Startups led by internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Where relevant, additional mentoring, networking opportunities and tailored support may be provided to address barriers related to access to finance, professional networks and market opportunities.

All applications will be assessed according to the eligibility and evaluation criteria established in this Guide.

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3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

3.1. Eligible Applicants and Legal Status

The Incub8 Open Call is open to pre-seed and seed-stage startups and entrepreneurial teams developing innovative products, services or technologies.

Applications may be submitted by:

- Individuals with an innovative startup idea;
- Unregistered startup teams represented by an individual applicant;
- Registered individual entrepreneurs (FOPs);
- Legally registered business entities.

University affiliation is not required. The Open Call welcomes both university-affiliated and independent startup teams.

Each applicant may submit only one application under the Incub8 Open Call. For unregistered startup teams, one designated individual must act as the lead applicant and represent the team throughout the application and selection process.

Applicants are not required to have an officially registered business at the time of important application to participate in the incubation programme.

However, **only registered individual entrepreneurs (FOPs) and legal entities are eligible to receive financial support under the Incub8 sub-granting scheme**.

Startups selected for financial support must have an appropriate legal status and fulfil all applicable contractual and financial requirements before the sub-grant agreement is concluded and funds are disbursed.

3.2. Startup Development Stage

Applicants must be at the **pre-seed or seed stage** of startup development. For the purposes of the Incub8 programme, these stages are generally understood as follows:

Development Stage	Description
Pre-seed	Early-stage startups developing or validating their business idea, identifying customer needs, testing initial assumptions or developing an early prototype.
Seed	Startups with an initial product, prototype or minimum viable product (MVP) that are validating market demand, developing their business model or preparing for market entry and investment.

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The programme welcomes startups at different levels of technological and commercial maturity.

Applicants are expected to demonstrate a clear development objective and the potential to make measurable progress during the six-month incubation programme.

Startups that have previously received grants, investments or other forms of financial support remain eligible to apply, provided they meet the programme's eligibility requirements.

Applicants will be assessed according to their respective development stage. Pre-seed startups are not required to demonstrate the same level of commercial traction, revenue or market validation as seed-stage startups.

3.3. Geographical Eligibility

The Incub8 Open Call is open exclusively to applicants based in the following 10 regions of Ukraine:

1. Chernihiv Oblast;
2. Dnipropetrovsk Oblast;
3. Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast;
4. Kharkiv Oblast;
5. Kyiv and Kyiv Oblast;
6. Lviv Oblast;
7. Odesa Oblast;
8. Vinnytsia Oblast;
9. Volyn Oblast;
10. Zaporizhzhia Oblast.

Applicants must demonstrate that their startup operates in, or that their business as an individual entrepreneur (FOP) or legal entity is registered in, at least one of the 10 eligible regions of Ukraine.

For unregistered startup teams, geographical eligibility is determined based on the location of their principal startup activities.

A founder residing abroad is eligible to apply if their business as an individual entrepreneur (FOP) or legal entity is registered in one of the eligible regions of Ukraine and the startup team is based and operates in that region, provided that all other eligibility requirements are met.

Applicants may be requested to provide supporting information or documentation confirming their geographical eligibility.

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A founder's residence abroad does not, in itself, make the startup ineligible. Startups with neither operations nor a registered FOP or legal entity in an eligible region are not eligible to participate.

3.4. Priority Sectors

Applicants should develop innovative solutions within at least one of the following priority sectors:

Priority Sector	Examples of Relevant Innovations
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	AI-powered products, machine learning, intelligent automation and data-driven solutions
AeroSpace	Aerospace engineering, aviation, space technologies and related advanced solutions
BioTech	Biotechnology, life sciences and bio-based technologies
DeepTech	Science-based innovations, advanced technologies and research-driven solutions
EdTech	Educational technologies, digital learning platforms and innovative learning solutions
GreenTech	Clean technologies, renewable energy, resource efficiency and environmental innovations
MedTech	Medical technologies, digital health, medical devices and healthcare innovations

Applicants should identify the sector that best represents their startup's core technology, product or business activity.

Startups operating at the intersection of several sectors may indicate relevant additional sectors in their application.

3.5. Age Requirements

The Incub8 programme primarily targets entrepreneurs aged 18-55 years, in accordance with the target group defined in the Grant Application.

Applicants must be at least 18 years old at the application deadline.

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Applications from individuals over 55 years of age will be considered separately by the Selection Committee on a case-by-case basis, subject to all other programme eligibility requirements.

Age-related information will be collected for programme monitoring and reporting purposes and will not be used as a basis for automatic rejection.

3.6. Inclusive Entrepreneurship

Incub8 promotes equal opportunities and inclusive entrepreneurship, encouraging applications from underrepresented groups within Ukraine's innovation ecosystem.

Particular attention is given to:

- Women-led startups;
- Veteran-led startups;
- Internally displaced person (IDP)-led startups.

The programme aims to achieve a balanced gender representation of 50% women and 50% men and to include at least 10 startup teams involving veterans or internally displaced persons.

Eligible startups from these categories may benefit from additional mentoring, tailored support, prioritised matchmaking opportunities and relevant networking activities through the programme's Inclusive Entrepreneurship Track.

Information concerning applicants' eligibility for the Inclusive Entrepreneurship Track will be collected voluntarily. Applicants may choose not to disclose such information, and the absence of a response will not be interpreted as a negative answer.

Participation in the Inclusive Entrepreneurship Track does not replace the general eligibility requirements.

The programme also provides for at least one women-led startup among the three final sub-grant recipients, subject to the applicable sub-granting rules.

3.7. Commitment to Programme Participation

Applicants must be willing and able to participate actively in the six-month incubation programme.

Selected startups will be expected to:

1. Participate in mandatory training activities and mentoring sessions.
2. Complete relevant practical assignments and programme milestones.
3. Engage in customer discovery, product validation and business development activities.
4. Participate in programme progress reviews and assessments.

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5. Attend mandatory programme-wide activities, including the National Matchmaking Forum.
6. Provide information necessary to assess their progress and programme outcomes.
7. Complete the final programme assessment and other applicable completion requirements.

Additional mandatory pitching activities apply to the 20 startups selected as National Pitch Day finalists.

Participants will also be expected to comply with the programme's applicable rules concerning professional conduct, confidentiality, intellectual property rights and the use of educational materials.

Certain training sessions may be recorded for educational purposes. Participants will be informed before recording takes place. Any public use of participants' names, images, presentations or other materials will be subject to applicable permissions and consent requirements.

Specific attendance requirements, where applicable, will be communicated to selected startups before the incubation programme begins.

3.8. Eligibility for Financial Support

Selection for the Incub8 incubation programme does not automatically guarantee financial support. All 70 selected startups may participate in the six-month incubation programme.

Following the Investment Readiness Assessment, 20 startups will be selected to participate in the National Pitch Day.

At the National Pitch Day, three startups will be selected to receive sub-grants of up to **EUR 10,000 each**, including at least one women-led startup.

The eligibility requirements for receiving financial support may differ from the requirements for participating in the incubation programme.

3.9. Eligibility Verification

All applications will undergo an eligibility check before proceeding to the evaluation stage.

The eligibility check will assess compliance with the published requirements, including:

- Completeness of the application;
- Pre-seed or seed-stage development;
- Alignment with at least one priority sector;
- Geographical eligibility;
- Compliance with the approved age requirements;

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- Readiness to participate in the six-month incubation programme.

Applications that do not meet the mandatory eligibility requirements may be rejected before qualitative evaluation.

Where eligibility cannot be determined from the information provided, the Incub8 team may request additional clarification from the applicant.

Applicants whose applications are found ineligible will be informed of the relevant reason.

No unpublished eligibility requirements or unapproved thresholds will be applied during the selection process.

Only applications that successfully pass the eligibility check will proceed to the qualitative evaluation stage.

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4. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

4.1. Application Submission

Applications for the Incub8 Open Call must be submitted electronically through the designated online application platform.

Application platform: https://incub8.com.ua/
Application deadline: 27.11.2026

Each applicant may submit only one application under the Incub8 Open Call.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their applications are complete and submitted before the published deadline.

Applications submitted after the deadline or through channels other than the designated application platform will not be considered.

4.2. Application Form

The application form consists of four main sections designed to collect essential information about the startup, its team, innovation and development objectives.

Section	Information Required
1. Startup Information and Eligibility	Startup name, lead applicant's contact details, legal status, development stage, priority sector, geographical eligibility and planned number of participants.
2. Problem, Solution and Market	Description of the problem, target customers, proposed solution, innovation, existing alternatives, market validation and business model.
3. Team and Development Objectives	Team composition, relevant experience, achievements to date, incubation objectives and readiness to participate.
4. Inclusive Entrepreneurship and Confirmation	Voluntary information relevant to the Inclusive Entrepreneurship Track, review of application responses and applicant declarations.

Applicants should provide clear, accurate and sufficiently detailed information to enable the assessment of their startup.

The application form will indicate mandatory fields, character limits and applicable submission formats.

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4.3. Supporting Documents

Applicants are required to upload a startup pitch deck in English as part of their application.

The pitch deck should provide a concise overview of the startup, including its problem, proposed solution, innovation, target market, team, current development stage and future plans.

Applicants may also provide links to their startup's website, product demo, prototype or other relevant materials, where available.

Business registration documents are not required from individuals or unregistered startup teams applying for participation in the incubation programme.

The pitch deck will be used as supporting material during the evaluation process. Applicants are not required to demonstrate commercial traction or revenue if their startup is at the pre-seed stage.

4.4. Application Language

All applications must be completed and submitted **in English**.

The mandatory startup pitch deck must also be prepared in English.

Applications submitted in other languages will not be considered.

4.5. Clarifications and Additional Information

During the eligibility verification process, the Incub8 team may contact applicants to request clarification of information provided in their applications.

Such requests will be limited to information necessary to verify compliance with the published eligibility requirements.

Applicants will be informed of the relevant requirements and any applicable deadline for submitting clarifications.

No unpublished eligibility requirements or unapproved thresholds will be applied.

4.6. Application Deadline and Confirmation

The application deadline will be published through the official Incub8 communication channels.

Upon successful submission, applicants will receive a confirmation email containing their unique application reference number.

Applicants are responsible for providing a valid email address and regularly checking their inbox throughout the selection process.

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Submission confirmation does not constitute confirmation of eligibility or selection for the incubation programme.

4.7. Application Review and Final Submission

Applicants must carefully review all information and uploaded documents before submitting their applications.

Once submitted, applications cannot be edited, replaced or withdrawn for resubmission.

The online application platform will provide an opportunity to review the completed application before final submission.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all required information and supporting documents are accurate and complete at the time of submission.

The Incub8 team may request clarification of information already submitted during the eligibility verification process. Such clarifications do not constitute an opportunity to revise or improve the original application.

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5. EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

5.1. General Principles

The Incub8 Open Call follows a transparent, fair and competitive selection process designed to identify 70 promising pre-seed and seed-stage startups for participation in the six-month incubation programme.

Applications will be evaluated based on their innovation potential, team capacity and market relevance, taking into account the startup's development stage.

The selection process will be conducted by a Selection Committee comprising representatives of HOSA, Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University and external experts.

All applicants will be assessed against the same published criteria. No unpublished eligibility requirements, scoring bonuses or selection thresholds will be applied.

5.2. Selection Stages

Initial admission through the Open Call consists of three stages; confirmation of the core cohort, where required, follows Section 6.5:

Stage	Description
Stage 1 - Eligibility Check	Verification of compliance with the eligibility requirements established in Section 3 of this Guide.
Stage 2 - Application Evaluation	Independent evaluation of eligible applications against the published qualitative assessment criteria.
Stage 3 - Admission to Initial Training	Approval of the initial training intake under Section 5.6, considering evaluation results and the programme's geographical, sectoral and inclusion objectives. Confirmation of the core cohort, where required, follows Section 6.5.

Only applications that successfully pass the eligibility check will proceed to qualitative evaluation.

Where eligibility cannot be determined from the information submitted, the Incub8 team may request clarification before making a final eligibility decision.

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5.3. Evaluation Criteria

Eligible applications will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Evaluation Criterion	Weight	Description
Innovation Potential	40%	Originality of the solution, differentiation from existing alternatives, technological or innovative potential, and feasibility.
Team Capacity	30%	Relevant expertise, ability to implement the proposed solution, distribution of responsibilities and commitment to startup development.
Market Relevance	30%	Understanding of the target customers, market needs, initial validation and potential for commercialisation.
TOTAL	100%	

Innovation Potential (40%)

This criterion assesses how effectively the startup addresses an identified problem through an innovative solution.

Evaluators will consider the originality of the proposed product, service or technology, its advantages over existing alternatives and the evidence supporting its potential.

Team Capacity (30%)

This criterion assesses the team's ability to develop and implement the proposed solution.

Evaluators will consider relevant experience, technical and business competencies, distribution of responsibilities and readiness to participate in the incubation programme.

Solo founders are eligible and will not be automatically disadvantaged compared with larger teams.

Market Relevance (30%)

This criterion assesses the startup's understanding of its target market and the potential demand for its solution.

Evaluators will consider the identified customer segment, evidence of market needs, validation activities, proposed business model and potential for market entry.

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Pre-seed startups are not required to demonstrate revenue or the same level of commercial traction as seed-stage startups.

5.4. Scoring System

Each evaluation criterion will be assessed using a five-point scale:

Score	Description
1 - Weak	The criterion is insufficiently addressed or lacks relevant supporting evidence.
2 - Limited	Some relevant information is provided, but significant weaknesses remain.
3 - Satisfactory	The application demonstrates reasonable potential supported by relevant information.
4 - Good	The application demonstrates strong potential supported by convincing evidence.
5 - Excellent	The application demonstrates outstanding potential supported by strong, stage-appropriate evidence.

The final score will be calculated using the following formula:

Final Score = (Innovation × 8) + (Team × 6) + (Market × 6)

The maximum possible score is **100 points**.

The evaluation will take into account the startup's development stage, ensuring that pre-seed and seed-stage applicants are assessed fairly.

5.5. Independent Evaluation

Each eligible application will be assessed independently by two evaluators.

Evaluators will review the submitted application form and supporting pitch deck and assign scores based on the published evaluation criteria.

All evaluators must disclose potential conflicts of interest and maintain confidentiality throughout the selection process.

Where significant differences between evaluations arise, the application may undergo additional review in accordance with the approved selection methodology.

The final application score will be calculated as the average of the completed independent evaluations.

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5.6. Final Selection of Startups

Following the evaluation stage, eligible applications will be ranked according to their final evaluation scores.

The Selection Committee will approve the initial training intake based primarily on the evaluation results. To support the programme target of 70 startups completing incubation, the organiser may admit more than 70 eligible startups, subject to available capacity and applicable grant conditions. Where the initial intake exceeds 70, the core cohort of 70 startups will be confirmed through the internal assessment described in Section 6.5. References in this Guide to 70 participating startups refer to the core cohort and completion target and do not limit the initial training intake under this section.

The programme aims to ensure representation across all 10 eligible regions of Ukraine, provided that a sufficient number of eligible applications are received. However, no fixed number of startups will be allocated to individual regions.

The composition of the initial intake and core cohort will also take into account the programme's priority sectors, gender equality and inclusive entrepreneurship objectives, and available programme capacity.

No minimum qualifying score will be applied. Startups will be selected based on their relative ranking and the approved cohort composition rules.

Any departure from the ranking to meet published programme objectives must be documented and justified by the Selection Committee.

Where appropriate, a reserve list may be established for applicants not admitted to the initial intake. This is separate from the active reserve of participating startups described in Section 6.5.

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5.7. Notification of Results

All applicants will be informed of the selection results by email.

Applicants may receive one of the following outcomes:

Outcome	Description
Selected	The startup has been offered a place in the Incub8 incubation programme.
Waitlisted	The startup may be offered a place if additional capacity becomes available.
Not Selected	The startup has not been selected for the programme.
Ineligible	The application does not meet the published eligibility requirements.

Applicants whose applications are found ineligible will be informed of the relevant reason.

Selected startups will receive further instructions regarding confirmation of participation, onboarding and the start of the incubation programme.

5.8. Transparency and Fairness

The Incub8 selection process will be conducted in accordance with the principles of transparency, equal treatment, impartiality and confidentiality.

The Selection Committee will ensure that:

- All applications are assessed against the published criteria.
- Evaluators act independently and disclose potential conflicts of interest.
- Selection decisions are documented.
- Applicants are not rejected based on unpublished requirements.
- Personal data is handled in accordance with applicable data protection requirements.

The decisions of the Selection Committee will be communicated through the official Incub8 channels.

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6. SIX-MONTH INCUBATION PROGRAMME

6.1. Programme Overview

Selected startups will participate in a structured six-month incubation programme designed to support the development, validation and commercialisation of innovative products, services and technologies.

The programme combines practical training, individual and group mentoring, expert consultations, networking opportunities and regular progress assessments.

Incub8 follows a hybrid delivery model, combining online learning activities with selected in-person events organised through its network of 10 regional university hubs.

The incubation programme is designed to support startups at different stages of development, allowing participants to apply the knowledge and tools acquired directly to their businesses.

6.2. Incubation Programme Structure

The six-month incubation programme is organised into six consecutive stages:

Month	Stage	Key Question	Expected Output
1	**DISCOVER**	Is this a real and important problem?	Validated Problem
2	**VALIDATE**	Does our solution address the problem?	Validated Solution / MVP Hypothesis
3	**BUILD**	Can we build and test it?	MVP / Prototype / PoC
4	**SELL**	Will customers use and pay for it?	Commercial Evidence / Traction
5	**SCALE**	Can this become a sustainable business?	Business & Investment Model
6	**PITCH**	Can we attract investors and partners?	Investment-Ready Startup

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6.3. Training and Educational Activities

Participants will have access to practical workshops, thematic training sessions and educational materials covering key aspects of startup development.

Training topics include:

- Business model development and validation;
- Market research and customer discovery;
- Product development and MVP testing;
- Marketing, sales and customer acquisition;
- Team development and startup management;
- Financial planning and fundraising;
- Pitching and investment readiness;
- Technology transfer, research commercialisation and intellectual property rights (IPR).

Workshops will generally take place weekly or biweekly, depending on the programme schedule.

Training activities will be delivered by experienced mentors, industry practitioners and invited experts.

6.4. Mentoring and Individual Support

Each participating startup will receive mentoring support throughout the incubation programme.

The mentoring framework includes:

Individual Mentoring

Startups will receive personalised guidance focused on their specific development challenges, objectives and progress.

Group Mentoring

Participants will take part in collaborative mentoring sessions, peer learning activities and thematic discussions.

Expert Consultations

Where relevant, startups may receive specialised guidance on technology transfer, intellectual property protection, commercialisation, fundraising and other sector-specific topics.

Mentoring activities will support startups in translating training content into practical business development results.

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6.5. Progress Monitoring and Assessments

Throughout the programme, startups will be expected to demonstrate progress towards their development objectives.

Progress monitoring may include:

- Completion of practical assignments and programme milestones;
- Participation in mentoring and training activities;
- Submission of startup progress updates;
- Presentation of product development and market validation results;
- Participation in programme assessments.

Progress assessments are intended to identify development needs, provide feedback and support continuous improvement.

If the initial training intake exceeds 70, the Selection Committee will conduct an interim assessment to select 70 startups for the core cohort. Selection will be based on participation in training and mentoring, completion and quality of required assignments, progress against agreed milestones, and commitment to completing the programme, taking account of each startup's development stage. The assessment date, scoring method and tie-breaking rules will be communicated before the programme begins; criteria will be applied consistently and decisions documented.

Other eligible participating startups may remain on a ranked active reserve and continue the training, mentoring and assignments needed to meet programme requirements. If a core startup withdraws or its participation ends under Section 8.8, a replacement may be invited in reserve order only where its records confirm that it can fulfil the same completion requirements within the programme period. Only verified completion of the full programme counts towards the 70-startup completion target; initial admission or selection for the core cohort alone does not.

Routine developmental progress reviews do not automatically result in exclusion from the programme. Confirmation of the core cohort and active-reserve status follows the separate interim assessment described in this section.

All 70 selected startups will have the opportunity to complete the six-month incubation programme, subject to compliance with the applicable participation requirements.

6.6. National Matchmaking Forum

The Incub8 programme includes a **National Matchmaking Forum**, bringing together participating startups, investors, industry representatives, mentors and innovation ecosystem stakeholders.

The Forum aims to:

- Facilitate connections between startups and potential investors;

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- Support partnerships with businesses and industry representatives;
- Create opportunities for technology commercialisation;
- Strengthen cooperation between regional startup ecosystems;
- Expand access to professional networks and market opportunities.

Participation in the National Matchmaking Forum forms part of the incubation programme's activities.

6.7. Investment Readiness Assessment and Pitch Day Preparation

During the fifth month of incubation, participating startups will undergo an Investment Readiness Assessment.

Based on the assessment results, **20 startups** will be selected to participate in the National Pitch Day.

These finalists will receive additional preparation, which may include:

- Pitch deck improvement;
- Individual pitching consultations;
- Presentation and public speaking training;
- Pitch simulations and expert feedback;
- Preparation for investor questions.

Selection as a National Pitch Day finalist does not guarantee receipt of a sub-grant.

Startups that are not selected among the 20 finalists will continue participating in the incubation programme and may complete all applicable programme activities.

6.8. Inclusive Entrepreneurship Support

Incub8 provides additional support opportunities through its Inclusive Entrepreneurship Track.

The Track is designed to address specific barriers faced by underrepresented entrepreneurs, including women, veterans and internally displaced persons.

Support may include tailored mentoring, targeted networking, prioritised matchmaking and practical guidance on accessing financing and markets.

Participation in the Inclusive Entrepreneurship Track is voluntary and does not replace the general programme requirements.

6.9. Programme Completion and Certification

At the end of the six-month incubation programme, participating startups will undergo a final progress assessment.

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The assessment will focus on the startup's development throughout the programme, including progress in product development, market validation, business model improvement and investment readiness.

Upon successful completion of the applicable programme requirements, 70 incubation programme participants will be eligible to receive an official Incub8 Certificate of Completion.

Certificates will be issued based on verified participation and completion records. The applicable completion requirements will be communicated to participants in advance.

In addition, the Incub8 programme provides certificates for 70 graduates of the Training of Trainers (ToT) Programme and 10 mentors upon successful completion of their respective programme components.

Certificates serve as official recognition of participation and competency development.

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7. NATIONAL PITCH DAY AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

7.1. Overview

The Incub8 programme provides selected startups with an opportunity to compete for financial support through the National Pitch Day.

Following the six-month incubation programme, **20 startups** will be invited to present their solutions to an independent jury.

Based on the results of the National Pitch Day, **three startups will be selected to receive sub-grants of up to EUR 10,000 each**, with at least one sub-grant awarded to a women-led startup.

The total financial support available under the sub-granting scheme is **up to EUR 30,000**.

Participation in the incubation programme or selection as a National Pitch Day finalist does not guarantee financial support.

7.2. Selection of National Pitch Day Finalists

During the fifth month of the incubation programme, all 70 participating startups will undergo an Investment Readiness Assessment.

The assessment will consider the startup's development progress and readiness to present its business to potential investors and industry stakeholders.

The assessment may cover:

- Progress achieved during the incubation programme;
- Development and validation of the proposed product or technology;
- Business model and market potential;
- Team capacity and implementation readiness;
- Financial planning and investment readiness.

Based on the assessment results, **20 startups will be selected as National Pitch Day finalists**.

The final assessment criteria and selection procedures will be communicated to participating startups before the assessment takes place.

Startups not selected as finalists will continue participating in the incubation programme and remain eligible to complete the programme and receive a Certificate of Completion, subject to the applicable requirements.

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7.3. Pitch Day Preparation

The 20 selected finalists will receive additional support to prepare for the National Pitch Day.

This may include:

- Pitch deck development and improvement;
- Individual mentoring and expert consultations;
- Presentation and public speaking training;
- Pitch simulations and feedback sessions;
- Preparation for questions from investors and jury members.

Finalists will be expected to participate in the relevant preparation activities and submit the required presentation materials within the communicated deadlines.

7.4. National Pitch Day

The National Pitch Day will take place during the final stage of the incubation programme.

Each finalist will have an opportunity to present their startup to an independent jury comprising relevant experts from the startup, investment and innovation ecosystems.

The expected presentation format is:

Activity	Duration
Startup pitch	5 minutes
Jury questions and answers	5 minutes
Total per startup	**10 minutes**

The final event format and organisational arrangements will be communicated to finalists in advance.

The National Pitch Day will provide startups with an opportunity to demonstrate their progress, receive expert feedback and establish connections with potential investors and partners.

7.5. Evaluation and Selection of Sub-Grant Recipients

The National Pitch Day jury will evaluate finalists based on their business potential, investment readiness and ability to implement the proposed development plans.

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The evaluation may consider:

- Innovation and competitive advantages;
- Market potential and commercialisation prospects;
- Business model and financial sustainability;
- Team capacity and implementation feasibility;
- Quality of the pitch and responses to jury questions.

The detailed evaluation criteria, scoring system and decision-making procedures will be communicated to finalists before the National Pitch Day.

Based on the jury's evaluation, **three startups will be selected to receive financial support**.

At least one of the three sub-grants will be awarded to a women-led startup, in accordance with the programme's gender equality commitments.

7.6. Financial Support

The Incub8 programme provides financial support to three startups selected through the National Pitch Day.

The Incub8 programme allocates up to EUR 30,000 in sub-grants to the three highest-performing startups (up to EUR 10,000 per startup). In addition, a separate budget is allocated to support the mandatory participation of six representatives (two per winning startup) in the EBN Annual Congress, covering transportation, accommodation and per diems. These international participation expenses are financed separately and do not reduce the sub-grant amounts.

The exact amount awarded to each startup will be determined based on its approved budget and development plan.

Sub-grant funding must be used exclusively for activities and expenditures included in the approved budget and directly related to the startup's development, validation or commercialisation objectives.

Double financing of the same costs from Incub8 and other funding sources is prohibited.

Sub-grant payments will be made in two instalments:

- **First instalment - 80%** of the approved sub-grant amount, following the signing of the Sub-Grant Agreement and approval of the startup's budget and implementation plan.
- **Final instalment - 20%** of the approved sub-grant amount, following the submission and approval of the final implementation and financial reports, including verification of the agreed deliverables.

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The detailed payment conditions, eligible expenditure categories, reporting requirements and verification procedures will be established in the Sub-Grant Agreement.

7.7. Legal and Contractual Requirements

Only startups registered as individual entrepreneurs (FOPs) or legal entities are eligible to receive financial support.

Startups participating in the incubation programme as individuals or unregistered teams must obtain the required legal status before signing the Sub-Grant Agreement.

Selected sub-grant recipients will be required to:

1. Provide valid registration and identification documents.
2. Submit an implementation plan and proposed budget for approval.
3. Sign the Sub-Grant Agreement with the designated contracting organisation.
4. Use the funding exclusively for approved activities and eligible expenditures.
5. Maintain appropriate financial and implementation records.
6. Submit the required progress and financial reports.
7. Participate in monitoring and verification activities, where applicable.
8. Fulfil the mandatory international participation requirements described in Section 7.8.

Failure to comply with the Sub-Grant Agreement may result in suspension of payments, reduction of the final payment or recovery of funds, in accordance with the applicable contractual provisions.

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7.8. Mandatory Participation in the EBN Annual Congress

The three startups selected to receive Incub8 sub-grants will be required to participate in the **EBN Annual Congress** as part of their programme commitments.

The Congress provides an opportunity to engage with European innovation ecosystem stakeholders, establish international partnerships and strengthen connections with potential investors and business partners.

Participation in the EBN Annual Congress is mandatory for all three sub-grant recipients.

Each selected startup must designate an authorised representative to participate in the Congress and fulfil the applicable participation requirements.

The Incub8 team will communicate the event schedule, travel arrangements and organisational requirements to the selected startups in advance.

The specific arrangements for covering travel and participation expenses will be determined in accordance with the approved project budget and applicable programme rules.

7.9. Important Conditions

Applicants should note that:

- Participation in the incubation programme does not guarantee selection for the National Pitch Day.
- Selection as a National Pitch Day finalist does not guarantee receipt of a sub-grant.
- Financial support is available only to the three selected sub-grant recipients.
- Receipt of financial support is subject to legal, contractual and financial verification.
- All sub-grant recipients must comply with the applicable funding and reporting requirements.

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8. Rights and Obligations of Participants

8.1. General Provisions

Participation in the Incub8 programme is free of charge for all selected startups.

By accepting an offer to join the programme, participants agree to comply with the programme's requirements, implementation schedule, code of conduct and applicable administrative procedures.

The programme is designed to provide a supportive, inclusive and professional environment in which early-stage startups can develop their business ideas, strengthen their entrepreneurial competencies and establish connections with relevant innovation ecosystem stakeholders.

8.2. Rights of Participants

All selected participants have the right to:

1. **Access the incubation programme - participate in the six-month incubation programme, including training sessions, workshops, mentoring activities and practical assignments.**
2. **Receive mentoring and expert support** - benefit from individual and group mentoring, expert consultations and guidance relevant to their startup's development needs.
3. **Access programme resources** - receive educational materials, methodological tools and other resources made available within Incub8.
4. **Participate in networking activities** - take part in relevant programme events, including the National Matchmaking Forum and other networking opportunities organised within Incub8.
5. **Receive fair and transparent treatment** - participate in an environment based on equal opportunities, non-discrimination and respect for diversity.
6. **Receive feedback** - obtain constructive feedback on their startup's progress, assignments and development milestones.
7. **Retain ownership of intellectual property** - maintain ownership of their pre-existing intellectual property and startup developments, subject to applicable law and any separate agreements voluntarily concluded by the participants.
8. **Receive recognition of programme completion** - obtain a certificate upon successful completion of the incubation programme and fulfilment of the applicable participation requirements.

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9. **Compete for further financial support** - be considered for selection among the 20 National Pitch Day finalists and, where selected, compete for one of three sub-grants of up to EUR 10,000 each.

Participation in the incubation programme does not guarantee selection for the National Pitch Day or receipt of financial support.

8.3. Obligations of Participants

All selected participants are expected to demonstrate active engagement throughout the six-month incubation programme.

Participants are required to:

1. **Actively participate in programme activities**, including scheduled training sessions, workshops, mentoring meetings and progress reviews.
2. **Complete assigned tasks and milestones** within the communicated deadlines, taking into account the startup's development stage and individual objectives.
3. **Maintain regular communication** with the Incub8 coordination team, assigned mentors and relevant university startup hubs.
4. **Provide accurate and up-to-date information** concerning their startup, team composition, development progress and participation in programme activities.
5. **Participate in monitoring and evaluation activities**, including progress assessments, feedback surveys and reporting exercises necessary to evaluate programme results.
6. **Respect confidentiality and intellectual property rights** of other participants, mentors, experts and programme partners.
7. **Comply with the programme's code of conduct**, including principles of professional behaviour, mutual respect, non-discrimination and prevention of conflicts of interest.
8. **Inform the programme coordination team of significant changes** that may affect their eligibility, participation or ability to complete programme activities.
9. **Comply with applicable legal and administrative requirements** relevant to their participation in the programme.

Participants are expected to make reasonable efforts to achieve the development objectives agreed with their mentors and the programme team.

8.4. Attendance and Programme Completion

Successful completion of the Incub8 programme requires active participation in its core activities and satisfactory fulfilment of the applicable learning and development requirements.

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The Incub8 coordination team will monitor participation through attendance records, mentoring logs, assignment completion and milestone assessments.

Participants who successfully complete the programme will receive an official Incub8 Certificate of Completion.

The programme budget provides for certificates for 70 incubation programme participants, alongside certificates for Training of Trainers graduates and mentors.

Detailed completion requirements and any justified exceptions will be communicated to participants at the beginning of the incubation programme.

Selection of the 20 National Pitch Day finalists does not affect the right of other participants to complete the full six-month incubation programme.

8.5. Confidentiality and Intellectual Property

Participants retain ownership of their startup ideas, business models, technologies, research results and intellectual property developed independently or brought into the programme.

Participation in Incub8 does not automatically transfer intellectual property rights to HOSA, participating universities, mentors or other programme partners.

Participants must respect the confidentiality of information shared by other startups, mentors and programme stakeholders.

Where confidential business or technical information is disclosed during mentoring, matchmaking or other programme activities, participants may request appropriate confidentiality arrangements.

Any intellectual property arrangements arising from specific collaborations will be governed by separate agreements between the relevant parties.

8.6. Communication, Visibility and Data Protection

Participants acknowledge that Incub8 is implemented with financial support from the European Union through Expertise France and is subject to applicable communication, visibility, monitoring and reporting requirements.

Participants may be requested to provide information about their startup's development, achievements and programme participation for legitimate project reporting and evaluation purposes.

Programme activities may be photographed or recorded for documentation purposes, subject to applicable data protection requirements and advance notice.

Any additional public use of identifiable photographs, video recordings, testimonials or promotional materials will be subject to applicable consent and data protection requirements.

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Personal data will be processed in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and the programme's privacy information.

Information voluntarily provided under the Inclusive Entrepreneurship Track will be handled confidentially and used only for the purposes communicated to participants.

8.7. Additional Obligations of Sub-Grant Recipients

The three startups selected to receive Incub8 sub-grants will be subject to additional contractual and financial obligations.

Sub-grant recipients must:

1. Hold the required legal status as a registered individual entrepreneur (FOP) or legal entity before signing the Sub-Grant Agreement.
2. Sign a Sub-Grant Agreement with HOSA.
3. Submit an implementation plan and budget for approval.
4. Use the awarded funds exclusively for approved activities and eligible expenditures.
5. Maintain appropriate financial documentation and supporting records.
6. Submit the required implementation and financial reports.
7. Cooperate with financial monitoring, verification and audit procedures.
8. Avoid double financing of the same expenditure.
9. **Ensure the participation of two designated representatives in the EBN Annual Congress**, in accordance with the programme's mandatory internationalisation requirements.

Transportation, accommodation and per diem support for participation in the EBN Annual Congress will be provided separately from the sub-grant, in accordance with the approved project budget and applicable financial procedures.

The payment schedule and detailed financial conditions will be established in the Sub-Grant Agreement and communicated to the selected beneficiaries before signing.

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8.8. Withdrawal and Non-Compliance

Participants who are unable to continue the incubation programme must inform the Incub8 coordination team as soon as reasonably possible.

In cases of repeated unjustified non-participation, failure to fulfil essential programme requirements, serious misconduct or provision of materially false information, the programme coordination team may review the participant's status.

Before making a decision concerning termination of participation, the team will, where appropriate, provide the participant with an opportunity to explain the circumstances and address identified issues.

Any decision to discontinue participation will be documented and communicated to the participant.

For sub-grant recipients, non-compliance with contractual obligations may result in additional measures, including suspension of payments, reduction of financial support or recovery of funds, where provided for under the Sub-Grant Agreement and applicable rules.

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9. CONTACT INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

For any questions regarding the Incub8 Open Call, eligibility criteria, application procedures or programme participation, applicants may contact the Incub8 coordination team at **program@incub8.com.ua**.

All official updates and announcements will be communicated through the programme's official channels.

Applicants are encouraged to submit their questions before the application deadline.

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10. LAST BUT NOT LEAST - FINAL PROVISIONS

By submitting your application to the **Incub8 Open Call**, you confirm that you have carefully read, understood, and accepted the rules, conditions, and requirements described in this Guide for Applicants.

The Incub8 programme is implemented by **Home of Startups Accelerator (HOSA)** in cooperation with its project partners, with financial support from the European Union through Expertise France under the EU4Innovation East programme.

Intellectual Property Rights

Your startup ideas, technologies, business models, and intellectual property remain your property. Participation in Incub8 does not transfer ownership of your intellectual property to the programme organisers or partners.

Key Obligations of Selected Participants

If selected, you commit to:

- Actively participate in the six-month incubation programme, including training, mentoring, and mandatory programme activities.
- Complete the required assignments, milestones, and progress assessments.
- Respect ethical standards, confidentiality, data protection, and programme visibility requirements.
- Maintain professional and collaborative behaviour throughout the programme.

The **three sub-grant winners** will sign a separate Sub-Grant Agreement with HOSA, defining their rights, obligations, financial support, payment conditions, reporting requirements, and mandatory participation in the EBN Annual Congress.

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Other Important Points

The Incub8 coordination team reserves the right to extend, modify, or cancel the Open Call in exceptional circumstances, subject to applicable funding requirements. Any changes will be communicated through official programme channels.

All personal data submitted during the application process will be processed in accordance with applicable data protection legislation.

For sub-grant recipients, the **Sub-Grant Agreement will serve as the binding legal document** governing financial support. This Guide for Applicants provides the general framework for participation in Incub8.

We sincerely thank you for your interest in Incub8 and for taking the next step in developing your startup.

We wish you success with your application and look forward to welcoming you to the Incub8 community!

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