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DOORS Open Call: Guide for applicants

- **Call opening: 14th December 2021**
- **Call deadline: 13th February 2022, 23:59 CET**

Deadlines will be strictly adhered to. Any submission past deadline will not be considered.

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About DOORS

Initiated by Ars Electronica, MUSEUM BOOSTER and Ecsite, **DOORS – Digital Incubator for Museums**, seeks to give small and medium-sized museums across Europe an opportunity to steer the direction of the sector’s digital transformation. The project wants to reduce the digitalisation gap by creating the space for small institutions to voice their needs and offering them access to knowledge, resources, expertise, and an **incubation and skill-building programme**.

During 2 years, experts from the museum sector, creative & tech industry and the consortium will cover several objectives:

- Identify and assess the digital needs of the European museum community.
- Engage 40 museums and tandems of cultural organisations in a unique incubation programme.
- Create an incubator for museums to address their digital transformation and enable the development and realisation of pilot projects together with experienced technical partners.
- Foster collaborations and exchanges among museums, experts from the creative and tech industry and cross-fertilisation with other sectors.

DOORS has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under Grant Agreement no. 101036071.

DOORS incubation programme

Through an open call and a following two-stage digital incubator, DOORS will involve 40 museums (and collaborative tandems) in a shared learning programme and further support the realization of 20 pilots focused on digital transformation and empowerment in the second stage. Pilots must be developed in one of the four concrete innovation areas:

- Innovating audience analysis and engagement
- New content distribution and revenue models
- Strategies for integrating infrastructures
- Experimental ICT programmes



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We invite museums to join DOORS and submit pilot proposals to take part in this two-stage incubation programme.

First incubation stage: Shared learning and capacity building

In the first stage, 40 museums will be part of a shared learning and capacity building programme that will enable them to refine their initial pilot proposals. The goal of this stage is to create a general framework for implementing digital pilots using learnings from the needs analysis and the self-diagnostics. During this period, museums will be supported in choosing a focal area of innovation and we will set the basis for cross-sector collaborations with the tech and creative industry.

Taking place from April to June 2022, this stage will be composed of 3 two-day workshops on digital strategies and digital maturity, comprehending audiences, possibilities for and relevance of new revenue models. Additionally, 3 to 6 group mentoring sessions will focus on media and digital production, including the selection of the best suppliers, efficient allocation of resources and exploitation strategies with sustainability in mind. See “What to expect in the 1st stage” for further details.

Beneficiaries will receive training support (€1.500 - of which € 750 is a mandatory workshop fee) to help them build their digital maturity.

Second incubation stage: Pilot development and implementation

The second stage of the incubation programme is the time for the 20 pilots to become a reality. For 9 months, from November 2022 until July 2023, museums will navigate the implementation of their digital pilots together with tech and creative industry partners, supported through exchange sessions and continuing mentoring.

A series of workshops will allow further joint practical investigation of the defined innovation areas. Along with their implementation journeys, institutions working on the same innovation area will part-take in three Progress Sharing Sessions to present their work and receive feedback. The particularity of each pilot will be addressed in four Individual Mentoring Sessions. Sustainability workshops held

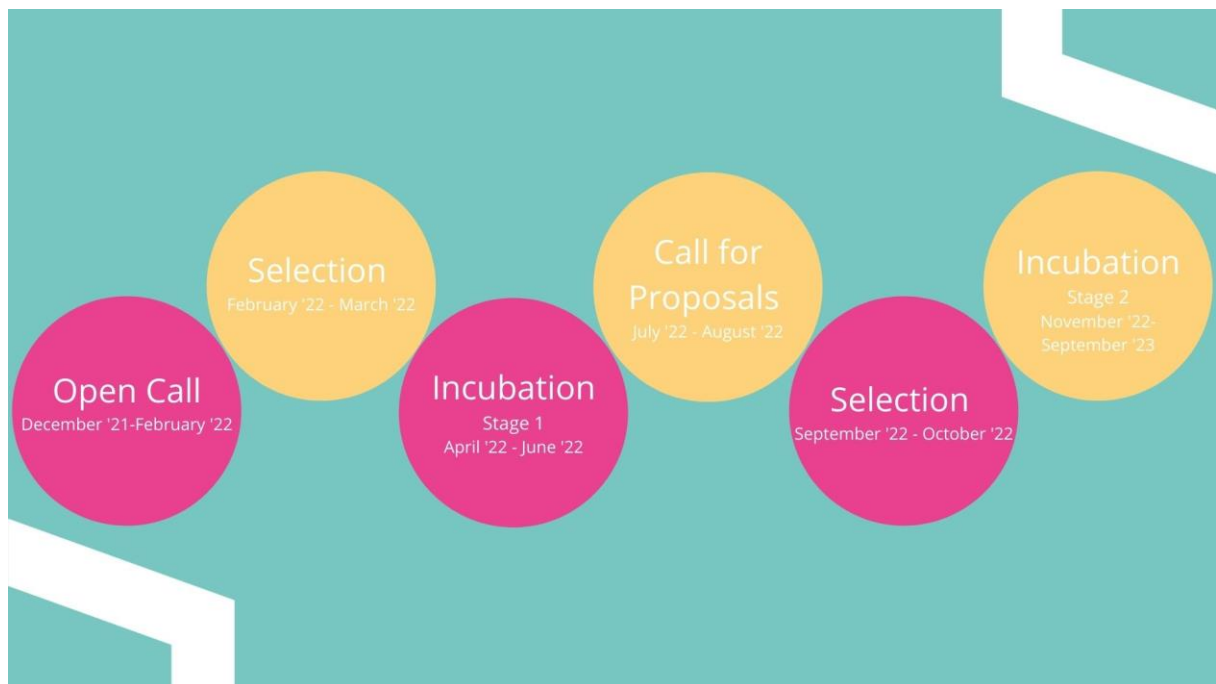


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during the Ecsite Conference (June 2023) will address the long-term impact of the digital strategies developed.

For this second stage, beneficiaries can receive up to €27.000 per pilot to fund activities needed to implement their digital pilots and take a step towards their digital transformation.

Timeline of the incubation programme



Why take part

The DOORS incubation programme is a unique opportunity for the strategic advancement of small and medium-sized museums interested in starting or advancing their digital transformation, accessing international expertise and funding to start and/or support their journey.

The consortium will provide institutions with:

- Access to a large pool of [international experts](#), technological providers and know-how from more digitally savvy industries.
- Access to a broad range of digital assessment & strategy building resources for museums.
- Tailored support for each piloting organisation's needs to start its digital transformation.
- Extensive knowledge exchange process to learn about relevant digitalisation projects.
- Networking opportunities.
- Help for museums in embedding new digital offerings in their established offer.
- Financial support: €1.500 (of which € 750 is a mandatory workshop fee) in the first incubation stage and up to €27.000 to develop a pilot project if the organisation is selected for the second stage.

Who is the funding for

The following cultural organisations are eligible to participate in the open call:

- Art museums
- Design museums & applied art museums
- Natural history and maritime museums
- Science centres and museums
- Botanical gardens & herbaria
- History & archaeology museums
- Open-air museums and historical sites

- Archives and libraries
- Visitor centres with primary cultural missions are also eligible, while showrooms and visitor centres with primary commercial objectives are excluded from the open call. This exclusion applies also to pop-up, mobile and temporary museums.
- Other cultural organisations (such as art galleries, art centres, festivals, ...) are also eligible if they can prove a permanent and ongoing cultural activity for at least two years and justify a clear relevance of the pilot for their overall organisation's strategy.
- Purely online or virtual museums can be eligible to participate as long as they have existed for 2 years and are of permanent character.

Eligibility criteria

The call is open to all museums and cultural organisations listed above and formed as a legal entity for at least 2 years in one member state of the European Union (including their overseas departments and outermost regions) or H2020 associated countries (see full list [here](#)).

The project's main target is small and medium-sized institutions. To take part in any of the strands, institutions should match at least one of the following criteria:

- Counting **less than 200 000 visitors in 2019** (In-person audience (*in situ* activity + off-site) or online audience for purely online/ virtual museums)
- A yearly turnover or balance sheet total of **less than €2 Million** for core museum operation

For the benefit of exchange and leveraging the knowledge and networks of bigger organizations, large museums (exceeding one or several of the above size criteria) are allowed to submit a proposal for any of the innovation areas in tandem with a minimum of one small and medium-sized museums as described above. Tandem applications must sufficiently demonstrate the benefit of the collaboration for the digital incubation programme.

For each tandem application, organisations involved need to choose one main applicant. This main applicant needs to comply with the eligibility criteria and will

be responsible for the application. The applicant will also be DOORS' contact point for administrative aspects such as contracting and final reporting.

Eligible activities for the pilots

The call is for the development and implementation of pilot activities linked with the digital transformation of museums and cultural organisations.

What is a pilot?

In DOORS' context, a pilot is a project related to museums' digitalisation, conceived by institutions individually or in tandem and in collaboration with the tech and/or creative sector. A pilot can be a completely new project or a phase in a longer-term transformation that reaches tangible results within the fixed period of the second incubation stage (i.e., 9 months). To carry out the activities needed for the implementation of the pilot, museums can receive financial support of up to €27.000.

Type of activities

Pilot activities can target different fields of digitalisation in museums such as collections and asset management, content production and preservation, access control and mediation, marketing and sales, communication, administration and governance, human resources, technical and IT infrastructure.

Applicants can submit proposals targeting digital innovation for online services (digital presence on the web and mobile access), for onsite services (including ICT such as big data or machine learning for analysing day-to-day processes or audiences) and services that bridge online and onsite worlds.

An exhaustive **list of eligible activities will be defined for the second stage of incubation based on the concrete needs identified together with the selected participants during the first incubation stage and through a needs assessment analysis conducted with experts.** However, it is foreseen that funding can be spent on personnel costs, equipment/infrastructure, staff training, services and any other

cost items deemed eligible and of relevance to the institution's digital transformation.

The grant cannot cover the maintenance of ongoing projects, however can be allocated for the significant strategic advancement and/or redevelopment with digital means. This implies that DOORS funding should contribute to an independent extension of the existing project.

Synergies with other sources of funding are encouraged as long as the grants are used for complementary, not overlapping purposes.

Innovation areas

All proposed actions in the pilot need to cover one of the 4 innovation areas:

- **Innovating audience analysis and engagement:** Developing innovative (hybrid and online) audience engagement formats to strengthen audience participation and loyalty. Pilots should develop interaction, participation and mediation tools and technologies for presentation based as well as hands-on & two-way communication formats. Experiments should include an appropriate audience analysis and assessment of the best engagement platform (web, social media, app, etc).
- **New distribution & revenue models:** Pilots should experiment with digital technologies, tools and existing platforms (developing web integration pilots) to enable novel ways of content distribution and revenue models (e.g. membership subscription, etc). Participants can work on increasing visibility of digital contents, metadata standards, digital narration strategies, digital distribution channels, low-tech presentations or content varieties for different target groups (active vs. passive, digital vs. virtual) etc. Pilots in this innovation area will be encouraged to develop synergies and technical integration possibilities with major European cultural platform providers.
- **Strategies for integrating infrastructure:** To ensure diversity in TRL (technology readiness levels) and include museums with no or few ICT (information and communication technologies) pre-investments - according to UNESCO still the major obstacle for digitalisation sector -, this innovation area will specifically target infrastructural pilots integrating ICT. While the

priority clearly lies on the integration process of the technology (including roll-out support, data security, value chain integration), pilots can include a part of the infrastructural purchase in the overall budget (up to 40%) if duly justified and proportional.

- **Experimental ICT program:** Sharing efforts and synergies within this collaborative innovation area should allow organisations to experiment with digital pilots one individual museum alone would be unable to. This innovation area seeks to encourage experimental pilots which change the use, application or perception of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) innovation in the museum sector. Due to the collaborative nature of this innovation area, single-institution applications are not eligible.

Timeline for the pilot delivery

To ensure the sustainability of the pilots, the projects will be evaluated against alignment with the general institutional development strategy. However, the first tangible results, respectively outlined/defined in the application, need to be achieved and presented at the Ecsite Conference (June 2023) and in pilots' reports completed by the end of incubation stage 2 (July 2023).

How to apply

DOORS will run two calls for proposals for its digital incubation programme. This call is for the first incubation stage taking place from April to June 2022. Only the 40 beneficiaries selected from this call will be further eligible to apply for the second incubation stage (the respective call is expected to be launched in summer 2022).

Application must be submitted via the [online platform](#) provided by Ars Electronica. To answer this call, institutions are required to follow the process outlined below:

- **Step 1** – Check eligibility criteria listed in the dedicated section of this call.
- **Step 1bis** – Check the [Declaration of Honour](#) and the [Orbit page](#) to make sure you don't have any conflict of interest with jury member(s).

- **Step 2** – Identify the innovation area (see section “Eligible activities for the pilots”) you want to apply to for the second stage of incubation. This can be reviewed at the end of the first stage.
- **Step 3** – Complete the diagnostic survey (coming soon).
- **Step 4** – Prepare your pilot submission. The applicant will be required to submit a short version of the proposal (3 pages) describing the core idea and a summary of the foreseen impact of the digital pilot that will be integrated into the existing infrastructure. Please read carefully the “Selection criteria” section of this call to make sure you provide all necessary details in the description of your pilot idea and foreseen impact.
- **Step 5** – Complete and submit your application on the online platform. Once you have registered a profile on the online submission platform, the following information and documents will be required:
 - Administrative information (Pilot and institution)
 - A short version of the pilot proposal (3 pages, PDF, see template [here](#))
 - Consent to [DOORS’ Privacy statement](#)
 - [Declaration of Honour](#)

When applying to the DOORS open call, please also note that:

- Only complete applications submitted before the deadline will be considered for review. The application reckons complete when the diagnostics survey is submitted (step 3).
- All mandatory sections must be written in English for the proposal to be eligible. Only parts written in English will be evaluated.
- Organisations are allowed to submit only one proposal for each innovation area.

Online information session

Two “Information for applicants” online sessions about this open call will be held on the **22 December 2021 (3:00-4:00 CET)** and **25 January 2022 (3:00-4:00 CET)**. These sessions are aimed at institutions interested in applying to the programme. The sessions will be announced on the DOORS website and partners’ social media channels. A recording of one of the sessions will be made available to applicants on the dedicated DOORS’ website page.

Selection criteria

Eligible proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria by the jury:

- **Pilot Idea excellence**

- Quality and Strength of the idea: Is the idea realistic and can it be achieved on the scale proposed? How does the pilot fit into the organisation's overall strategy?
- Innovation potential linked with the organisational context: Does the pilot project fit into one of the innovation areas? Is the idea innovative in its specific institutional setting/context and what is its long-term potential?
- Relevance to the call: How will the pilot benefit from participating in the DOORS incubation programme?

- **Impact**

- Value proposition: What challenge(s) will the pilot address and how? Is the pilot relevant to the expected outcome? What are the end benefits of the pilot both for the organisation itself, its staff, its audience and external stakeholders (if relevant)?
- Timing: Can the pilot be developed from the initially proposed concept to achieve the target aims within the DOORS timeframe?
- Sustainability: How is the organisation planning to ensure the sustainability of the pilot beyond the DOORS project's lifespan/end of funding?

- **Implementation and organisational context**

- Motivation: What is the motivation for applying to this incubation program and what benefits do you foresee it bringing to your organization's long-term strategy?
- Resources: How many staff members do you plan to involve in the project and how will they benefit from the programme? Do you plan on adding new staff members? Do you intend any infrastructural acquisitions within the realisation of you pilot and if yes, what part of the budget (in %) do you respectively intend to allocate?
- Equity, diversity and inclusion: What is the general approach to equity, diversity and inclusion in your institution?

To ensure a diverse and inclusive portfolio of institutions and pilots that cover all **innovation areas, institutions sizes and geographical areas**, grants will not only be awarded based on ranking. The highest ranked proposals from each part of the territory of the European Union and Associated Countries will be prioritised, provided that these applications attain all thresholds.

Evaluation process

Evaluations of the first stage will take place between February and March 2022. The evaluation will be conducted by external jury members and experts selected to ensure the best possible expertise and transparency in the evaluation process.

To ensure the highest possible quality, the review and selection process is divided in 3 steps:

Step 1 – Eligibility checks

DOORS' team will check the formal requirements (such as eligibility and full submission) following the application submission. Proposals considered not eligible will not proceed to step 2.

Step 2 – Pre-jury: individual review and selection

Eligible proposals will be reviewed and scored by two jury members against the criteria listed in section "Selection criteria". Jury members will be asked to provide an overall score, on a 5 points scale, as well as recommendations of shortlisted applications.

Step 3 – Final group review

All jury members will come together for a group discussion to ensure consistency of the evaluation and scoring and transparency in the evaluation process.

Public announcement of the call results

Results will be published on the DOORS website and announced to participants in April 2022. All participants will receive a summary of their evaluation based on the evaluation form.

Administrative arrangements

Successful applicants will have to enter an agreement with Ecsite before starting the first stage of the incubation programme in April 2022. Before the signing of the agreement the following steps must be completed:

- **Due diligence checks:** DOORS' team will check the applicant legal entity information, ethics requirements, financial information and any other checks as requested by the European Commission before starting the pilot incubation. Should you fail the due diligence checks, DOORS reserves the right to reject the application.
- **Consent forms** for personal data handling and collecting publishable information & results.

Requirements

In the first incubation stage, selected pilots are expected to:

- Sign the pilot agreement.
- Participate in all the incubation programme activities.
- Dedicate a project coordinator. Additional representatives can be nominated for most of the activities.
- Produce a diagnostics report based on the diagnostics framework provided by the DOORS' team at the beginning of the incubation programme.
- Use the project's online workspace.
- Agree with the Open access publication policy of DOORS project.
- Submit a final evaluation report.

ANNEX 1: What to expect in the 1st stage

The objective of the first incubation stage is to ensure that the staff within all piloting organisations acquire the necessary skills and competencies to navigate digital transformation processes. This capacity-building phase will consist of the following elements:

- **Status quo analysis:** Support in conducting a diagnostics exercise to assess the institutions' needs and current capacities, inquire about enablers and barriers to increasing digital activity and make sure that the strategies and services they are about to develop are in line with their situation and context.
- **3 two-days training and learning blocks** with experts to approach digital maturity and staff capacity building for digital productions. The workshops will focus on data use, audience comprehension and development, sustaining and developing revenue models for both online and onsite cultural offers, as well as hybrid models. These will form a foundation for the incubation programme to further support museums in meeting their aspirations with digital technologies.
- **Pitching sessions** from tech and creative sector providers.
- **Access to an online meeting space** for museums and technological providers to meet one on one.
- **Collective mentorship sessions** to provide support in the final definition of pilot direction and ensure that the final pilot formulation is relevant, realistic and innovative.
- **Exchange and collaboration opportunities** through onboarding sessions, exploration and tutorials on shared workspace, communication plan and initial networking opportunities.

ANNEX 2: What to expect in the 2nd stage

The second stage of the incubation programme is the time for the pilots to become a reality. Museums will navigate the implementation of their pilot, supported by exchange sessions and continuing mentoring. It will be composed of the following elements:

- Monthly **“Open Hour Sessions”** to enable a frequent exchange between partners and the discussion of collective questions.
- **Peer-to-peer Scheme:** Each pilot will be assigned with a “buddy organisation” (from the pool of other piloting organisation) to foster peer-review and support in the incubation phase.
- **6 inspiration sessions** every two month on clustered topics focusing on external best practices examples.
- **3 workshops** over the course of the incubation period on topics related to the Innovation Areas.
- **3 Progress sharing sessions** where projects of each Innovation area will present their progress and receive feedback.
- **4 Individual mentoring sessions:** each pilot will receive three mentoring sessions from one expert mentor and an additional mentoring unit by a second mentor from a different expertise area.
- **Sustainability workshops** as part of the second public conference taking place during the Ecsite Conference to present all pilots outcomes to museum operators across Europe and enable a systemic pilot take-over from interested stakeholders.