OPEN CALL ANALYSIS

LLM-BRIDGE VIP: 2ND CALL FOR INCUBATORS

Up to EUR 60,000 for one incubator to run a 12-week generative AI programme (2nd cohort, 2027)

EUnita strategic translation

This call pays one incubator to run a programme; it does not pay start-ups to build products. The Digital Europe project LLM-BRIDGE gives one organisation up to EUR 60,000 (the call document describes it as a fixed lump-sum contribution) to design and run the second cohort of its Venture Incubation Programme: 12 weeks, at least 30 early-stage generative AI start-ups chosen by the project, a Demo Day and eight other indicators. The money comes in two payments: 40% after signature and an approved plan, 60% after the final report and a check on results. Six scored criteria (42 points, minimum 26, with a threshold on each) decide who is chosen, and only an organisation with three years of its own incubation record can apply. The deadline is a Saturday, 28 November 2026. A third call, for 2028, is announced without dates.

INCUBATOR CALL ANALYSIS

Fit assessment | Sources | What it funds | Boundaries | Budget & competition | Eligibility | Money | Evaluation | Risks

Deadline: 28 November 2026, 17:00 CET (18:00 in Romania); a Saturday

Call budget: EUR 60,000 | One incubator, up to EUR 60,000 | At least 30 start-ups | Opened 28 September 2026

Prepared by

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Analysis date: 19 November 2026

This analysis interprets the official call documentation for applicants. It is not legal advice. The official texts are the call document (2nd Cohort, 33 pages; file dated 28 September 2026), the info-session FAQ and slides of 3 November 2026, the call page, the Funding & Tenders Portal records of the call and of the project, 28DIGITAL's info-session page, the parent call document, the Commission's list of participating countries and the online application form; where this analysis and an official text differ, the official text prevails. Labels used: ***Confirmed*** *(stated in an official source),* ***EUnita interpretation*** *(a reading or recommendation by EUnita),* ***Derived estimate*** *(arithmetic by EUnita on official figures).*

1. Decision summary: is this call for you?

The LLM-BRIDGE Venture Incubation Programme (VIP) is run by the Digital Europe project LLM-BRIDGE (grant agreement 101226136). This call, the 2nd Open Call for Incubators (also written “2nd Cohort”; Portal competitive call 16242), selects one incubator to design and run the second 12-week cohort in 2027 for at least 30 early-stage start-ups working with large language models and generative AI, for up to EUR 60,000 (a fixed lump-sum contribution), which is the whole budget of the call. The call is for incubators, not start-ups, which apply to a separate call. The deadline is Saturday 28 November 2026, 17:00 CET (18:00 in Romania).

Item	Confirmed position	Source
Who gives the grant	Financial support to third parties (cascade funding) under Grant Agreement No. 101226136, Digital Europe Programme; 28DIGITAL runs the call and signs the Third-Party Agreement	Call doc. p. 3, 6, 12
Budget and grant	EUR 60,000 in total, for one incubator: a fixed lump sum of at most EUR 60,000 tied to milestones and deliverables, paid 40% at the start and 60% at the end (EUR 24,000 and EUR 36,000 at the maximum, derived estimates); no co-financing requirement stated	Call doc. p. 6–7
What is delivered	One 12-week cycle for at least 30 early-stage GenAI and LLM start-ups, a Demo Day and eight other indicators; the Consortium selects the start-ups	Call doc. p. 3–6, 31–33
Who may apply	One legal entity established in an EU Member State or a Digital Europe associated country, with at least three years of start-up incubation experience; not selected for another cohort; proposal and delivery in English	Call doc. p. 8
Deadline, how to apply	28 November 2026, 17:00 CET; online form, proposal on the Annex D.4 template (one PDF)	Call doc. p. 9, 14
Evaluation	Six criteria, 42 points, minimum 26 and a threshold on each; at least two independent experts; panel ranking; Consortium approval	Call doc. p. 9–10, 16
After the deadline	Indicative dates: notification February 2027; agreement March 2027; kick-off April 2027; Demo Day June to July 2027; final review December 2027	Call doc. p. 14
Status on 19 November 2026	Open since 28 September 2026; third call for the 2028 cohort announced without dates	Call page; Call doc. p. 3

Good fit

- ✓ Incubators and accelerators with at least three years of their own incubation programmes, preferably in AI, NLP or deep tech, and records to show for them
- ✓ Organisations that can run a 12-week English-language cohort of at least 30 early-stage start-ups in 2027, with mentors, facilities and networks
- ✓ Business and technology parks, innovation consultancies and VCs that run incubation programmes
- ✓ Teams with an investor and industry network that can host a Demo Day (onsite, online or hybrid)
- ✓ Organisations that can count enrolment, Demo Day presentations, MVPs, satisfaction and investor interest

Not a fit

- ✗ Start-ups and scale-ups seeking funding for themselves: they apply to the Consortium's separate start-up call
- ✗ Organisations with fewer than three years of their own incubation experience, or established outside the EU Member States and the Digital Europe associated countries
- ✗ The incubator of the first cohort (Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini) and any organisation selected for another cohort
- ✗ Entities under EU restrictive measures, and Hungarian public interest trusts and the entities they maintain (parent call document)
- ✗ Applicants who expect to choose the start-ups themselves, or who need indirect costs reimbursed or more than EUR 60,000

EUnita verdict (interpretation)

A good fit for an incubator or accelerator with three years of documented incubation experience, a mentor network and an English-language programme it can adapt to generative AI, and able to finish a six-question proposal by Saturday 28 November 2026, 17:00 CET. It is a single-winner call: one incubator, EUR 60,000 at most, paid in two stages, with the larger stage (60%, a derived estimate of EUR 36,000) depending on results the incubator does not fully control, because the Consortium selects the start-ups. The six criteria, each with its own threshold, decide the outcome, and the number of applications is not published. Open points: consortia, the PIC, the Declaration of Honour, the binding payment dates and the text of the Third-Party Agreement.

2. Source verification and document status

Document	Version or date; status on 19 November 2026
Call document, 2nd Cohort (33 pages, Annexes A to E)	File dated 28 September 2026; no version number printed; prevails over the FAQ and slides (FAQ p. 1)
Info-session FAQ (6 pages); slides (14 slides)	Info session of 3 November 2026; files dated 9 November 2026
Call page; Portal records of call 16242 and of project 101226136	Current
Parent call document DIGITAL-2024-BESTUSE-07; Commission list of participating countries	Version 1.0, 11 June 2024 (parent topic, closed); version 7.0, 1 December 2025
1st Call for Incubators: call document; FAQ	Files dated 20 January 2026 and 17 March 2026; previous call, closed

Where the official documents differ

- Programme start: section 3.1 says March 2027; Table 2 (p. 14) and the slides give signature in March and kick-off in April 2027. Table 2 applies (the call calls it indicative).
- Payment dates: the call document gives none and puts the final review in December 2027; the slides show 40% in March 2027, 60% in August 2027 and KPIs verified in September 2027. The call document prevails (FAQ p. 1); EUnita interpretation: plan for the later date.
- Payment conditions: Table 1 (p. 7) ties the first 40% to contract signature and an approved implementation plan; Annex E.4 (p. 33) adds completion of onboarding, the onboarding plan (D1) and confirmation of operational readiness, and for the final 60% adds at least 80% of the quantitative KPIs to Table 1's list (section 9). EUnita interpretation: both texts apply.
- Notice to unsuccessful applicants: five weeks after panel ranking (call document p. 10), four weeks on the Portal page. The call document applies.
- Establishment: the Portal description and 28DIGITAL's page say "EU-based incubator"; the call document, the call page and the FAQ say an EU Member State or a Digital Europe associated country. The call document applies.
- Lump sum or budget: the call document calls the grant a fixed lump sum (p. 6), yet the proposal asks for a budget summary (p. 30–31), the report template has "Budget" and "Used" columns (p. 26–27) and the audit clause mentions bank records (p. 22). No text says whether actual costs are checked against the lump sum.
- Online form page: it prints its deadline sentence without day or month and repeats wording of an earlier call; the call document, the call page and the Portal give 28 November 2026, 17:00 CET, and that date applies.

3. What the call funds

The call funds delivery, not research. One incubator designs and runs the second cohort of the VIP for at least 30 early-stage start-ups that develop solutions powered by large language models (LLMs) and generative AI (GenAI). The Consortium runs the start-up call and selects the start-ups; the incubator delivers the programme (FAQ 3.1).

The programme (Call doc. p. 3–6)

- Three cohorts: the first ran in 2026, this call concerns the second (2027), and a third call will follow for the 2028 cohort. Each cohort has one incubator and a 12-week cycle; for this cohort the minimum is 30 incubated start-ups (Annex E.1, p. 31).
- Phases: onboarding; acceleration, with tailored mentoring and business development on GenAI, model design, ethics, regulation and fundraising; Demo Day and evaluation against the Annex E indicators (p. 4). The slides show a bootcamp in week 1, training and mentoring in weeks 2 to 11 and the Demo Day in week 12 (Slides 7).
- The start-ups are at problem-solution fit and pre-market stage (FAQ 2.5). Format: onsite, online or hybrid, open to start-ups across Europe; proposal and delivery in English (p. 6, 8).

What the incubator must do (Call doc. p. 4–6, 13–14)

- Support the start-ups in validating the value proposition and the technical solution, with structured mentoring, and guide them on the AI Act, the GDPR and the Data Act; facilitate, with the project partners, access to data spaces, LLM models and HPC infrastructures.
- Organise the Demo Day, where start-ups present MVPs to investors, mentors and industry stakeholders; connect them with research institutions, investors, industry and the Acceleration and Entrepreneurial Education programmes.

- Track progress, collect the Annex E indicators and report with the Annex D.3 templates on the Annex C.4 schedule; designate a Programme Manager; foster cross-border participation, under-represented regions and groups, and gender balance; display the EU emblem, the acknowledgement text and the LLM-BRIDGE logo.

What the grant pays for (Call doc. p. 6–7)

- Costs of staff, mentoring, management, travel, communication and reporting needed to deliver the 12-week programme; no additional or indirect cost reimbursement. Eligible activities: mentoring and training on lean start-up principles; GenAI and LLM incubation modules; access to technical resources and specialist advice; monitoring and reporting; the Demo Day and EU-level dissemination events.
- Not covered: start-ups' travel and accommodation (p. 6, footnote 4; FAQ 2.3); activities outside the approved implementation plan or already funded through other public grants (p. 7).

Policy anchors

- Digital Europe Programme (specific objective SO5 on the Portal's project record), topic "Support to the implementation of Multi-Country Projects (MCPs)", DIGITAL-2024-BESTUSE-07-MULTICOUNTRY. The parent call document allows financial support to third parties with a call open for at least two months, a clear European dimension, a maximum of EUR 60,000 per third party unless a higher amount is justified, and at most 20% of the requested EU funding; this call is open from 28 September to 28 November 2026 and sits at the EUR 60,000 ceiling.
- The incubator contributes to growth of the start-up cohort, European GenAI innovation capacity, and ethical, multilingual and culturally adaptive AI (p. 5); the programme is aligned with the AI Act, the Data Act and the GDPR (p. 3).

4. Boundaries: avoid the wrong door

Several LLM-BRIDGE and 28DIGITAL calls have similar names. Only the first row is the call described here.

Call or programme	For whom	State on 19 November 2026	Source
2nd Open Call for Incubators (2nd Cohort): this call	Incubators; one selected; up to EUR 60,000	Open; deadline 28 November 2026, 17:00 CET	Call doc.; call page
1st Open Call for Incubators (2026 cohort)	Incubators	Closed: 20 January to 23 March 2026; Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini selected	Portal call 13022
Open Call for Start-ups, 1st Call (2026 cohort)	Early-stage GenAI start-ups; up to five of the best may receive EUR 25,000 each (Portal budget EUR 125,000)	Closed on 1 June 2026, 17:00	Portal call 13681
Start-up call for the 2027 cohort	Start-ups	Not published; the FAQ says it "will be launched very soon"	FAQ 3.2
Acceleration Programme, 1st Open Call	Market-ready GenAI and language-technology companies (TRL 8 to 9) aiming at Series A	Closed on 18 November 2026, 17:00 CET	Project page
3rd Call for Incubators (2028 cohort)	Incubators	Announced; dates, budget and conditions not published	Call doc. p. 3

Call or programme	For whom	State on 19 November 2026	Source
28DIGITAL's own "Venture Incubation Program"	Early-stage ventures; selected ventures give 28DIGITAL 5% equity through a SAFE	A different programme with a similar name; applications closed on 9 June 2026	28DIGITAL page

EUnita interpretation: a start-up that wants LLM-BRIDGE support should wait for the start-up call for the 2027 cohort; a market-ready company aiming at Series A should have looked at the Acceleration Programme; an incubator that cannot finish a proposal in time cannot count on the third call, which is announced without dates.

5. Budget, competition and expected number of grants

Confirmed: the call funds one incubator, and the EUR 60,000 is both the most that incubator can receive and the total available under the call. There is no range of grant sizes and no ranking beyond the first place.

Item	Confirmed figure	Source
Total funding available; number of incubators	EUR 60,000; one (a fixed lump-sum contribution of a maximum of EUR 60,000)	Portal record; Call doc. p. 3, 6
Parent-call ceiling for one third party	EUR 60,000, unless a higher amount is justified; at most 20% of the requested EU funding	Parent call document
Cohort size	At least 30 incubated start-ups (about 30 per cohort, at least 90 over three cohorts)	Call doc. p. 3, 31

Derived estimate: at the minimum cohort of 30 start-ups, the EUR 60,000 maximum is EUR 2,000 per start-up (60,000 ÷ 30), and it must also cover the incubator's staff, management, travel, communication, reporting and the Demo Day. The call was open for two months (28 September to 28 November 2026), which matches the parent call's minimum.

Competition. Not published: the number of applications received by this call or by the 1st call, and any success rate. Confirmed: the 1st call selected one incubator. No figure is estimated here. The selection steps are in section 10.

6. What has been funded before

Confirmed: the 1st Open Call for Incubators (Portal call 13022) ran from 20 January to 23 March 2026, 17:00, with a budget of EUR 60,000, and selected one incubator, Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini (FGB). The project's first-cohort page reports 29 start-ups from 13 countries; the FAQ states that only one start-up dropped out and that the first cohort is still being analysed. Not published: the number of applications to the 1st call, the scores and the amount actually paid. The page gives no legal form for FGB; EUnita interpretation: its name points to a foundation, so a foundation can be selected, and the 2nd call's documents name no legal form as required or excluded.

What changed from the 1st call to the 2nd

- Cohort and experience: "up to 30" start-ups in the 1st call, "at least 30" in the 2nd; three years in "startup incubation or acceleration" in the 1st, three years in "startup incubation" with demonstrable deep-tech incubation experience in the 2nd; an organisation selected for an earlier cohort is ineligible in the 2nd.
- Final payment and timing: the 2nd call adds at least 30 incubated start-ups and at least seven of the eight other indicators to the 80% KPI condition; kick-off moves from June 2026 to April 2027 and the final review from December 2026 to December 2027 (indicative). Unchanged: EUR 60,000

maximum; 40% / 60% payments; six criteria, 42 points, minimum 26; 12-week programme.

7. Who should apply, and with which ideas

The call names “VC, accelerators, innovation consultancies, business and tech parks among other entities” as incubators (p. 3, footnote 1). The table reads those categories and others against the six template questions; only the named categories are confirmed, the rest is EUnita interpretation.

Type of applicant	What a strong proposal shows	Evidence to have ready
Accelerator or incubator with an AI or deep-tech record (named in the call)	A 12-week curriculum that takes start-ups at problem-solution fit to a validated MVP, with GenAI and LLM modules, named mentors and a Demo Day format	Start-ups supported, incorporation, MVP development, funding raised, market entry (Slides 13; Annex D.4, Q2)
Business or technology park, innovation consultancy (named in the call)	Facilities, digital infrastructure and networks that start-ups can use in practice; tailored services	Three years of programmes run, with outcomes; how start-ups reach investors, industry and research partners (Q3)
VC with an incubation programme (named in the call)	Investor networks and a documented incubation programme	Programme records; a clear statement on double funding and conflicts of interest
Foundation, non-profit or university incubator (EUnita interpretation)	Impact-driven support, cost-effective delivery, deep-tech experience and access to technical resources	Programme records; the applying legal entity must show three years of relevant incubation programmes (FAQ 4.1); budget in the four template categories (Q6)

EUnita interpretation: ideas that fit the call

The call rewards a programme that is easy to deliver and to count: a weekly rhythm over 12 weeks with onboarding and a bootcamp, GenAI and LLM modules, regulation (AI Act, GDPR, Data Act), investor readiness, an MVP validation routine and a Demo Day that at least 80% of the start-ups reach, with each activity linked to an Annex E indicator.

8. Eligibility checklist

Marks: ✓ a confirmed condition to meet; ✗ a confirmed bar; ? a point the documents leave open. Page numbers refer to the call document unless stated.

✓	Legal entity established in an EU Member State or a Digital Europe associated country (p. 8; Annex D.1, p. 24; call page; FAQ 3.3). Romania is eligible as an EU Member State.
?	The Portal description and 28DIGITAL’s page say “EU-based incubator”, which reads narrower; the call document prevails (FAQ p. 1). An organisation outside the EU can ask the Open Call Helpdesk (p. 14) first.
✓	At least three years of the applying organisation’s own start-up incubation experience, preferably in AI, NLP or deep tech, with demonstrable deep-tech incubation experience; a separate incubator entity is not required if an organisation with a wider scope shows three years of relevant incubation programmes (p. 8; FAQ 4.1). Capacity to deliver one intensive 12-week programme with qualified mentors, facilities, networks and digital infrastructure (p. 8).
✓	Compliance with EU data-protection, ethics and funding rules; Declaration of Honour: not bankrupt, insolvent or in liquidation, financially stable, no conflict of interest with the Consortium or its partners (p. 8, 24; membership of 28DIGITAL is not a conflict, FAQ 4.2). Co-funding from other EU or national programmes covers distinct and clearly separable activities, with no double funding (p. 8).

✓	One complete proposal in English on the official template (Annex D.4) through the online form; the programme is delivered in English; this is the only submission by the organisation under this call (p. 8–9, 28).
✗	Confirmed bar: selected as funded incubator for another LLM-BRIDGE VIP cohort (an incubator may be funded in only one of the three cohorts, p. 8); late or incomplete submission, or a paper or email submission (p. 9).
✗	Confirmed bar in the parent call document (section 6, p. 13): entities subject to EU restrictive measures, and, since 16 December 2022, Hungarian public interest trusts established under Hungarian Act IX of 2021 and any entity they maintain. The 2nd call's documents do not repeat these rules; whether the Third-Party Agreement applies them is not published.
?	Open: consortia (the 2nd call's documents name one applicant organisation and do not mention consortia; the 1st call's FAQ said a proposal could include partners) and the Participant Identification Code, PIC (the slides list a valid PIC, the call document does not mention one, the online form marks it optional).
?	Open: which countries qualify. The call does not list the associated countries; the Commission's list (version 7.0) limits ten non-EEA countries to specific objectives 1, 2, 4 and 5, and the call does not say how this applies. The Portal records SO5, which that list covers; EUnita interpretation: the limit does not appear to exclude those countries, but only the helpdesk can confirm it.
?	Open: whether the Declaration of Honour (Annex D.1) and the GDPR consent form (Annex D.2) go in with the proposal (Annex C.1 asks the selected incubator for a Declaration of Honour before signature); and the legal form, which is neither required nor excluded although the proposal cover page asks for it.

9. How the money works: up to EUR 60,000 in two payments

- Confirmed: "a fixed lump-sum contribution of a maximum of EUR 60,000, calculated on the basis of predefined activities and measurable outcomes" (p. 6), tied to verified milestones and deliverables under a Third-Party Agreement (p. 7). The slides say the requested funding may cover 100% of the total activity budget, up to EUR 60,000 (Slides 5); no co-financing requirement is stated in the call document, the FAQ, the slides or the Portal page. Eligible costs and exclusions: section 3.
- Not settled: whether actual costs are checked against the lump sum (section 2). Not published: how VAT, state aid or tax rules apply to the lump sum.

The two payments (Call doc. p. 7, Table 1)

Stage	Share	Trigger	Derived estimate of EUR 60,000
1. Initial payment	40%	Contract signature and approved implementation plan (including onboarding and delivery of the onboarding plan); pre-financing to initiate and deliver the incubation cycle	EUR 24,000
2. Final payment	60%	Acceptance of the final report; at least 30 incubated start-ups; at least seven of the eight other performance indicators achieved; mandatory compliance fulfilled; released after verification of results by the Consortium	EUR 36,000

Confirmed: what Annex E.4 adds (p. 32–33)

- A start-up counts as incubated when it is enrolled, takes part in at least one substantive incubation activity within the 12-week cycle and appears in the participant and activity records.
- A shortfall against the 30-start-up minimum prevents the release of the final payment until remedied and verified. For other unmet targets the Consortium may reduce the final payment proportionately; the incubator may first provide missing evidence or complete corrective actions. At least 80% of the quantitative KPIs must be achieved or exceeded, and GDPR, branding and reporting requirements met.
- KPI updates are communicated before the programme starts, included in the Third-Party Agreement and cannot retrospectively alter the published conditions (Annex E.5).

Payment dates: see section 2. Not settled: the investor-interest indicator in Table 6 is measured "within 6 months post-programme" and must reach at least 25% of start-ups (p. 32); it is one of the eight other indicators, of which at least seven must be met (p. 33). Derived estimate: six months after a programme that ends in June to July 2027 is December 2027 to January 2028, later than the slides' September 2027 and at or after the call document's December 2027 final review. The documents do not say when or how it is evidenced or whether early evidence counts.

Reporting and conditions (Call doc. p. 7–8, 20–22)

- Deliverables: D1 onboarding plan at signature; D2 summary report in week 10 of the programme; D3 final report within 30 days after programme finalisation (Table 5); progress tracked on the online reporting platform; an optional remote mid-term review (Annex C.3). Audit by the Consortium and the Commission at any stage; records kept at least five years after final payment (p. 22).
- Payments may be suspended, the final contribution reduced or funds recovered if activities are not implemented as agreed, reports are incomplete, late or falsified, or visibility, dissemination, data-protection or ethics requirements are breached; recovery is pro rata on validated deliverables, and non-compliance may lead to ineligibility for future LLM-BRIDGE open calls (p. 7–8).

10. Evaluation

Confirmed: each criterion is scored from 0 to its maximum; the maximum corresponds to "Excellent" and the threshold is aligned with "Good". The overall minimum is 26 out of 42, and a proposal below the threshold on any one criterion is not considered for funding (p. 16).

Criterion	Max	Threshold	What it looks for (p. 16)
Relevance	10	6	Alignment with the LLM-BRIDGE objectives, including the ability to support early-stage GenAI start-ups with start-up validation methodology and lean start-up principles
Track record	8	5	Proven experience in incubating and scaling AI or deep-tech ventures, with demonstrated outcomes
Networks and access	8	5	Access for start-ups to mentors, investors, research organisations, corporate partners and industry
Adaptability	6	4	Flexibility to address emerging technological and market needs, particularly in GenAI
Monitoring framework	5	3	Documented processes for tracking and reporting, with clearly defined metrics

Criterion	Max	Threshold	What it looks for (p. 16)
Cost effectiveness	5	3	Appropriateness and justification of the budget; value for money
Total	42	26	Overall minimum score: 26 out of 42

Derived estimate: the six thresholds add up to 26, so a proposal that reaches every individual threshold also reaches the overall minimum.

Procedure and tie-break

1. Eligibility check: proposals that fail the criteria are not evaluated; applicants are notified within 15 working days of the closure of the call (p. 9).
2. Independent review by at least two external experts appointed by the Consortium, who sign a Declaration of Impartiality and Confidentiality; 28DIGITAL does not score (FAQ 4.2).
3. Consensus score per proposal; remote clarification meetings may be held solely to clarify information; no changes to the proposal after the deadline.
4. Panel meeting of evaluators and Consortium representatives establishes the ranking; a reserve list is kept. The Consortium validates the ranking and approves the proposal recommended for funding; each applicant receives an Evaluation Summary Report with scores and comments (p. 10, 17).

- Confirmed: ties are resolved by the higher score in Relevance, then Track record, then Networks and access; if still tied, the panel takes into account the diversity of the team and the geographical reach of the incubator's activities across Europe (p. 17).
- Confirmed: the call document speaks of "six weighted criteria" with "a maximum total of 42 points" (p. 9). EUnita interpretation: the weights are the maximum points of each criterion, since no other weighting is described.
- Confirmed: applicants may ask for redress within ten working days of the notification (p. 11–12).

11. Application package and timeline

Item	What it contains	Source
Online application form	Reached from the call page ("Apply Now!"): organisation name, country of establishment, registration or VAT number, optional PIC, contact person and email, one application file (PDF), consent boxes. Submission only through the form	Call page; form page; p. 9
Proposal (Annex D.4)	Cover page (legal form, funding requested up to EUR 60,000, organisation profile of at most 30 words, four declarations, signature); six questions, one per criterion; budget summary in four categories (programme management; mentoring and experts; events and Demo Day; reporting and coordination), total at most EUR 60,000	Call doc. p. 28–31
Declaration of Honour (D.1), GDPR consent form (D.2)	Declarations on establishment, solvency, no earlier cohort, no conflict of interest, no double funding, ethical, environmental and social principles; whether they are uploaded with the proposal is not stated	Call doc. p. 24–25
After selection	Registration certificate, VAT number, bank details, Declaration of Honour, updated plan and activity calendar; the Third-Party Agreement is signed within 15 calendar days of notification, otherwise the funding may go to a reserve-list applicant; the model agreement is not published	Call doc. p. 20
Language and limits	English; no page or word limit is stated, other than 30 words for the organisation profile	Call doc. p. 8, 28

Timeline

Date	Step	Status	Source
28 November 2026, 17:00 CET	Submission deadline (a Saturday; 18:00 in Romania)	Confirmed	Call doc. p. 9, 14
Within 15 working days of the deadline	Applicants that fail the eligibility criteria are notified by email	Confirmed	Call doc. p. 9
Until the end of December 2026	Evaluation: eligibility check, independent review, consensus, panel ranking	Planned	Call doc. p. 14
February 2027	Applicants notified with the Evaluation Summary Report; redress within ten working days. Unsuccessful applicants: within five weeks of the end of panel ranking (Portal: four weeks)	Planned	Call doc. p. 10, 11, 14
March 2027	Third-Party Agreement signed; the slides show the first 40% payment in March	Planned	Call doc. p. 14, 20; Slides 6
April 2027	Programme kick-off: onboarding and start of implementation (section 3.1 says March 2027)	Planned	Call doc. p. 14
May 2027	Mid-term review (optional remote review session)	Planned	Call doc. p. 14, 20
June to July 2027	Programme completion and LLM-BRIDGE Demo Day	Planned	Call doc. p. 14
August and September 2027	Slides: 60% payment after the final report (August); KPIs verified (September)	Indicative (slides)	Slides 6
December 2027	Final review: completion of activities and final reporting	Planned	Call doc. p. 14

Helpdesk: the LLM-BRIDGE Open Call Helpdesk, contact@llm-bridge.eu, with the subject line “Open Call Helpdesk – LLM-BRIDGE Incubator Call [Application ID]”, takes questions on the submission process, eligibility and the evaluation procedure (p. 14); queries submitted after the deadline are not considered (p. 15); no earlier cut-off for questions is stated. 28DIGITAL, which leads the open calls and programmes, is at llm-bridge@28digital.eu (project contact page); redress requests and ethics reports go to contact@llm-bridge.eu (p. 11–12).

12. Risks and red flags

Risk or red flag	Why it matters	Source
Short time left	The deadline is Saturday 28 November 2026, 17:00 CET (18:00 in Romania). Late or incomplete submissions are not considered; no paper or email route; no changes after the deadline.	Call doc. p. 9–10, 14
Final payment depends on results	The 60% (EUR 36,000 at the maximum, a derived estimate) needs the final report, at least 30 incubated start-ups, at least seven of eight other indicators and compliance (section 9). Below 30 start-ups it is blocked until remedied; other shortfalls can reduce it proportionately. The investor-interest indicator can only be measured after the programme ends, so the date of the 60% payment is uncertain.	Call doc. p. 7, 14, 32–33
You do not choose the start-ups	The Consortium runs the start-up call, which is not yet published for the 2027 cohort, yet the 30-start-up minimum and the Demo Day share (at least 80%) depend on that cohort. The first cohort had 29 start-ups; the documents do not describe how a shortfall is remedied.	FAQ 3.1, 3.2, 5.2; Call doc. p. 31, 33

Risk or red flag	Why it matters	Source
Cash and cost limits	Only 40% (EUR 24,000 at the maximum, a derived estimate) comes at the start; payment dates differ between the documents (section 2). No indirect costs, no payment of start-ups' travel and accommodation, no overlap with other public grants.	Call doc. p. 6–7, 14; Slides 6
Country wording and exclusions	The call document prevails over the Portal's "EU-based incubator" (section 2). The parent call document excludes entities under EU restrictive measures and Hungarian public interest trusts; the 2nd call's documents do not repeat this and the Third-Party Agreement is not published. Consortia, the PIC and the Declaration of Honour are also open (section 8).	Call doc. p. 5, 8; FAQ p. 1; parent call doc. p. 13
Contract and funding condition	The Third-Party Agreement must be signed within 15 calendar days (section 11); its text is not published. The collaboration depends on LLM-BRIDGE receiving funding from the European Commission; 28DIGITAL may delay, modify or cancel agreements.	Call doc. p. 8, 12–14, 20–22
Mixing up the calls	The start-up call, the Acceleration Programme, the 1st incubator call and 28DIGITAL's own Venture Incubation Program have similar names and different rules (section 4). An organisation selected for an earlier cohort is ineligible (p. 8, 24, 28).	Section 4

13. EUnita recommendations

1. **Decide first whether the deadline is realistic.** You need three years of your own incubation record, mentors and facilities, an English-language programme from April to July 2027 (planned) and a Demo Day. An incubator that cannot file by 28 November 2026 cannot count on the third call, which has no published dates.
2. **Write to the scoring.** Relevance (10 points, threshold 6) carries the most points; Track record and Networks and access follow (8 each, threshold 5). Every criterion has a threshold, so give each of the six questions a complete answer.
3. **Prove the three years with facts:** programmes run, start-ups supported, incorporation, MVP development, funding raised, market entry (Annex D.4, Q2; Slides 13).
4. **Build the budget in the four template categories, at or below EUR 60,000.** No indirect costs; nothing already paid by another grant; no start-up travel. Show how each cost serves an Annex E indicator.
5. **Plan around the indicators** (Annex E, Table 6): at least 30 incubated start-ups; at least 80% of them at the Demo Day; at least 80% with a functional MVP validated by mentors or users; satisfaction of at least 4.0; at least 10 completing investment-readiness assessment or pitch training; at least 25% securing investor interest or letters of intent within six months after the programme; at least 2 partnership events; at least 10 mentors and partners from industry or academia; at least 3 visibility actions; 100% branding compliance and reports on time.
6. **Plan cash on the two payments** (section 9): EUR 24,000 (40%) after signature and the approved plan, and EUR 36,000 (60%) only after the final report is accepted and results are verified (derived estimates at the maximum); plan for the later payment date (section 2).
7. **Submit early through the online form and use the helpdesk before the deadline:** queries after 28 November 2026 are not considered.
8. **Keep the other calls apart** (section 4).

Next round. Confirmed: a third call will follow for the 2028 cohort (p. 3); unsuccessful applicants may re-apply in future call rounds (p. 10). Not published: the date, budget, eligibility conditions and number of incubators of the third call, and the date of the start-up call for the 2027 cohort.

Unresolved points

- Whether consortia or partners may apply in the 2nd call (silent; the 1st call's FAQ allowed them), and how a Participant Identification Code is treated (slides: valid PIC; form: optional; call document: silent).
- Which countries are Digital Europe associated countries for this call, how the specific-objective limit applies to non-EEA participants, and whether "EU-based" in the Portal description narrows the call document's wording.
- Whether the Third-Party Agreement applies the parent call document's exclusions (entities under EU restrictive measures; Hungarian public interest trusts).
- When and how the investor-interest indicator (within six months after the programme) is evidenced, and whether early evidence counts.
- Whether the Declaration of Honour (D.1) and GDPR consent form (D.2) are submitted with the proposal.
- The binding payment dates, the model Third-Party Agreement, whether actual costs are checked against the lump sum, and the treatment of VAT, state aid and tax.
- The date and place of the Demo Day, and where the onsite parts of the programme are held.
- The number of applications to this call and to the 1st call; the dates of the third call and of the start-up call for the 2027 cohort.

Sources

- Call document: Open Call for Incubators, 2nd Cohort (33 pages): https://www.llm-bridge.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/LLM-BRIDGE-%E2%80%93-Venture-Incubation-Programme-Open-Call-for-Incubators-%E2%80%93-2nd-Call_vf.pdf (file dated 28 Sep 2026)
- Info-session FAQ, 3 November 2026: https://www.llm-bridge.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/LLM-BRIDGE_InfoSession_03112026_VIP_Incubators_2nd_Call_FAQs.pdf (file dated 9 Nov 2026)
- Info-session slides, 3 November 2026: https://www.llm-bridge.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/LLM_BRIDGE_VIP_2nd_Call_Info_Webinar_v3.pdf (file dated 9 Nov 2026)
- Call page, project website: https://www.llm-bridge.eu/open-call-for-incubator-2nd-cohort/
- Funding & Tenders Portal: competitive call 16242: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/competitive-calls-cs/16242
- Funding & Tenders Portal: project 101226136 (LLM-BRIDGE): https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/projects-details/43152860/101226136/DIGITAL (facts from the Portal's project data record)
- Parent call document DIGITAL-2024-BESTUSE-07, version 1.0 (11 June 2024): https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/digital/wp-call/2024/call-fiche_digital-2024-bestuse-07_en.pdf
- Digital Europe Work Programme 2023-2024 (C(2023) 8620, Annex 1): https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/100740
- List of participating countries in the Digital Europe Programme, version 7.0 (1 December 2025): https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/digital/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_digital_en.pdf
- First cohort page (selected incubator, 29 start-ups): https://www.llm-bridge.eu/programmes/vip-first-cohort/
- 1st Call for Incubators: call document: https://www.llm-bridge.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/LLM-BRIDGE-%E2%80%93-Venture-Incubation-Programme-Open-Call-for-Incubators-1st-Call.pdf (file dated 20 Jan 2026)
- 1st Call for Incubators: info-day FAQ: https://www.llm-bridge.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/LLM-BRIDGE-Open-Call-for-Incubators-Infoday-FAQs.pdf (updated 17 Mar 2026)
- Open Call for Start-ups, 1st Call: page: https://www.llm-bridge.eu/open-calls-2/open-call-for-startups/
- Acceleration Programme, 1st Open Call: page: https://www.llm-bridge.eu/open-call-acceleration-programme-1st-cohort/
- Programmes page, project website: https://www.llm-bridge.eu/programmes/
- Contact page, project website: https://www.llm-bridge.eu/contact/
- 28DIGITAL info-session event page: https://28digital.eu/newsroom/events/2026/llm-bridge-venture-incubation-programme-info-session/

Checked 19 November 2026. Official updates prevail.