

# MASTER

## Guide for applicants

MASTER 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call

March 2024

*Submission of applications starts on 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2024, at 09:00 (CET)*

*Submission deadline: 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2024, at 17:00 (CET)*



Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## Disclaimer

The information and views set out in this application form are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Neither the European Union institutions and bodies nor any person acting on their behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.

## Table of Contents

Disclaimer .....	2
Table of Contents.....	2
Table of Figures.....	3
Table of Tables.....	3
1 Overview and summary of the Open Call .....	4
1.1 Background information on MASTER project.....	4
1.2 MASTER 1 <sup>st</sup> Open Call overview .....	5
1.3 Why should you apply to this call? .....	5
1.4 MASTER 1 <sup>st</sup> Open Call in a nutshell.....	6
1.5 What challenges can be addressed in the applications for this domain? .....	6
1.6 What happens after the proposals are submitted? .....	7
1.7 What are the next steps? .....	7
2 Financial support provided .....	8
3 Eligibility criteria .....	9
3.1 Types of Beneficiaries.....	9
3.2 Eligible countries .....	9
3.3 English language.....	10
3.4 Multiple submissions.....	10
3.5 Submission system .....	10
3.6 Deadline .....	11
3.7 Absence of conflict of interest.....	11
3.8 Other .....	11
4 Preparation and submission of the proposals .....	13
5 Summary of evaluation process.....	14
5.1 Evaluators.....	14
5.2 Evaluation criteria .....	14
5.3 Scoring.....	15
5.4 Proposal submission.....	15
5.5 Evaluation workflow.....	15



6	Applicants communication flow .....	18
6.1	General communication procedure .....	18
6.2	Appeal procedure .....	18
7	Obligations of FSTP beneficiaries.....	19
8	Implementation of the programme.....	20
9	Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).....	21
9.1	IPR ownership of the sub-granted projects.....	21
9.2	Communication obligations.....	21
10	Support for the applicants .....	22
11	Timeline .....	23
12	Applicable law .....	24
13	Glossary .....	25
14	Annexes .....	26
14.1	Annex 1: Informed consent form .....	26
14.2	Annex 2: Processing of personal data .....	26
14.3	Annex 3: Call Announcement .....	26
14.4	Annex 4: Challenges definition .....	26
14.5	Annex 5: Eligible and ineligible costs.....	26
14.6	Annex 6: General Requirements .....	26
14.7	Annex 7: Application Form .....	26

## Table of Figures

Figure 1. MASTER approach	4
Figure 2. Beneficiaries selection process	16

## Table of Tables

No table of figures entries found.



# 1 Overview and summary of the Open Call

## 1.1 Background information on MASTER project

Many industries are transitioning to I4.0 production models by adopting robots in their processes. In parallel, XR technologies have reached sufficient maturity to also enter the domain of industrial applications, with early success cases often related to the training of workers, remote assistance, access to contextual information and interaction with digital twins. MASTER is a Research and Innovation Action (RIA) project, funded by the European Commission. This project looks at the intersection of both technologies: robots and XR. The use of robots in industry will be increasingly enhanced with XR applications, and workers must be able to understand both technologies and use hybrid solutions confidently. Achieving this, is a challenge that education and training programs must meet. The objective of MASTER is to boost the XR ecosystem for teaching and training of robotics in manufacturing by providing an Open XR platform that integrates key functionalities for creating safe robotic environments, programming flexible robotic applications (programming by demonstration in flexible robotic application development) and integrating advanced interaction mechanisms (innovation in gaze-based interaction). MASTER will also deliver rich training content on robotics. MASTER proposes integrating third party contributions through two Open Calls:

The first one aims to provide the platform with additional technologies and functionalities. The selected companies will have the opportunity to integrate their technology in the platform and test it with a wide range of end-users.

The second Open Call is aimed at the education sector, by offering the possibility to test first-hand the platform and tools to create their own content.

MASTER is based on 5 Pillars that group the innovation proposed:

- An Open XR platform that integrates different OpenXR based components and allows an easy creation of content for robotics teaching by non-experts (PILLAR 1)
- The integration of safety and health at work aspects in the training programs through XR technologies (PILLAR 2)
- XR tools to facilitate the development of robotics applications and their control, in particular when dealing with collaborative robotic applications (PILLAR 3)

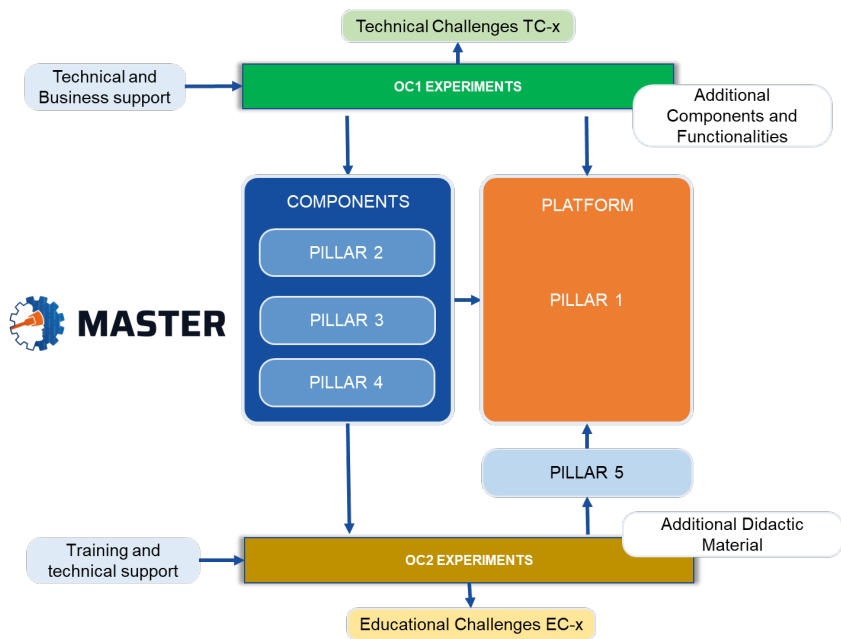


Figure 1. MASTER approach

- To provide multimodal interaction mechanisms to improve the usability of XR systems (PILLAR 4)



- The delivery of a collection of educational content based on XR for learning robotics technology in manufacturing (PILLAR 5)

An additional objective of the Open Calls is to validate the XR platform, components, and generated content from the technical point of view, as well as from the human perspective. This will be done in two different ways:

- The validation of the results provided by partners of MASTER and those provided to the platform by the successful third parties in the 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call are validated by the end-users to which TF-CC has access. (University, Secondary and Vocational Education students, as well as professionals). To this end, the consortium will create an initial set of didactic material.
- Later, the successful third parties in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Open Call, will use a second release of didactic material to validate the technologies and the content itself. Moreover, these third parties will create new content that will be tested as well.

### 1.2 MASTER 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call overview

MASTER partners have the technologies, resources and experience required to create innovative technological XR components, and educational materials that exploit XR technologies for teaching and education. In fact, from the onset of the project, the partners in MASTER will be conducting innovations for the 5 pillars on which the MASTER methodology sits. In spite of the expertise and competences within the MASTER, significant contribution will be needed from other parties to round up the achievement of all objectives set in the project.

The **objective of the 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call for Applicants** is to attract the best candidates able to provide innovative technologies to create rich XR experiences and validate the platform and technologies developed in the project with students (schools or professional training services).

The 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call will request applicants to address and solve any of the proposed challenges, or to propose their own challenge, within the scope of the MASTER project.

### 1.3 Why should you apply to this call?

There are several good reasons why companies and research institutes should apply to the 1<sup>st</sup> open call:

- If you are a Technology Developer on XR technologies, you have the opportunity to bring your innovative technology closer to the market – reach TRL 6 at the end of the application.
- If you are a Research Institute in the field of XR technologies, you can develop new XR-based technologies or to innovate the existing ones.
- If you are an Education Organization, you have the opportunity to bring your own challenges and have them tested first-hand.
- As a micro-consortium you can receive financial support up to € 150K for innovative proposals,
- You will have the opportunity to showcase your work in the community and develop your innovative business together with other members.



Partners from the MASTER consortium will provide **technical mentoring** to each experiment during the whole execution period. The execution of winning projects proposed by third parties (Experiments) will last for 9 months, which will include both the **development** of technologies and their **integration** with the MASTER-XR platform. The last 4 months will include the **technical validation** of the results.

## 1.4 MASTER 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call in a nutshell

In the following table, key information for the 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call can be found.

Title	Description
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SMEs<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Large companies<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• University/Research/Education organizations</li> </ul>
<b>Beneficiaries' location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU Member States</li> <li>• Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) linked to the Member States</li> <li>• Third countries associated to Horizon Europe<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Composition of micro-consortium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 1 SME should be in the micro-consortium</li> </ul>
<b>Coordinator of micro-consortium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always an SME should be the coordinator</li> </ul>
<b>Maximum funding per application</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 150.000€ / application – at least 2 beneficiaries per application</li> <li>• 100.000€ / application – only 1 SME per application</li> </ul>
<b>Funding per organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% for large companies</li> <li>• 100% for everyone else</li> </ul>
<b>Total funding for 1<sup>st</sup> OC</b>	€2,400,000
<b>Application Duration</b>	9 months
<b>Application Stages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M1-M5: Development of the proposed solution</li> <li>• M6-M7: Integration to MASTER-XR platform</li> <li>• M8-M9: Technical validation</li> </ul>

## 1.5 What challenges can be addressed in the applications for this domain?

- Safety and ergonomomy in workplace
  - TC – 1: “Integrating machine learning methods to VR tools towards accurate layout planning and validation”

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the [EU recommendation 2003/361](#)

<sup>2</sup> Large enterprises employ 250 or more people ([EC source](#))

<sup>3</sup> The list is correct at the time of adoption of this Work Programme. Please see the [Horizon Europe List of Participating Countries](#) on the Portal for up-to-date information on the current list and on the position for Associated Countries.



- TC – 2: “XR-based environment for ergonomics training methods to evaluate and best-practices suggestion”
- TC – 3: “Real-time visualization of safety-related information in XR environment to increase operators’ safety awareness”
- TC – 4: “Open challenge related to improved working conditions in the workplace”
- Intuitive robot programming
  - TC – 5: “XR-based system to program on demand tasks to stationary robots”
  - TC – 6: “XR-based programming of mobile robots for intralogistics operations”
  - TC – 7: “Intuitive XR-based robot programming for assembly and packaging tasks”
  - TC – 8: “Any challenge related to Intuitive robot programming of manufacturing operations”
- User-friendly HRI methods
  - TC – 9: “Interaction systems in multi-player virtual environments”
  - TC – 10: “Advanced multi-modal (i.e. voice, gesture, gaze ) interaction system”
  - TC – 12: “Interactive system to unlock accessibility capabilities in the XR environment”
  - TC – 13: “Open challenge related to user-friendly HRI methods in the workplace”

## 1.6 What happens after the proposals are submitted?

Immediately after the 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call submission deadline (31<sup>st</sup> of May 2024, at 17:00 CET), the evaluation process will begin (as described in detail in Section 5 of this Guide). In order to be eligible for Expert’s evaluation phase, applications will be checked for compliance against the eligibility criteria.

Experts will evaluate proposals submitted through the online system and score them adequately to the quality of the content presented. The goal of the process in the 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call is to select a total number of up to at least 16 promising applications.

## 1.7 What are the next steps?

Once your proposal is evaluated by 2 (two) independent and confidential evaluators, MASTER consortium will select, among those above the threshold, the best proposals in each pillar, trying to allocate at least one proposal in every challenge. Once all these formalities are executed, the Consortium will sign the ‘MASTER Sub-grant Agreement’ with the final beneficiaries of FSTP. The applicants who undersign the Sub-Grant Agreement will be declared the winners of the 1<sup>st</sup> MASTER Open Call. This is the beginning of the 9-month program.



## 2 Financial support provided

In OC1, any kind of organization can apply to the program and receive funding. The maximum financing contribution for each proposal will be 150.000€. Large Companies, namely companies with a workforce of more than 250 employees, turnover of more than €50 million and/or balance sheet total of more than € 43 million, will receive 50% funding. The rest applicants will receive 100% funding.

Financial support to beneficiaries will be provided in three instalments:

- The first one (30%) before the launch of the activities.
- The second one (30%) on M6, after the delivery of the self-assessment report that will be evaluated by the MASTER consortium which will make a “go-no-go” decision.
- The third one (40%) after the end of the application, once the final report will be delivered and approved by the MASTER consortium.

LMS will be the only organisation responsible for making the payments: funds will be secured in a dedicated account at a trusted bank. Payments will be made after a verification of the bank account details (IBAN) of the beneficiaries.





### 3 Eligibility criteria

All applicants will have to abide by all general requirements described in Sections 3.1 to 3.9 of this Guide for Applicants in order to be considered eligible.

#### 3.1 Types of Beneficiaries

As described in section 1.4, beneficiaries of the Open Call programme could be any for-profit or non-profit entity that belongs to one of the following entities:

- SMEs<sup>4</sup>
- Large companies<sup>5</sup>
- University/Research/Education organizations

Please, be aware that while checking the company's status, if it's an SME, the linked parties of the company are also taken into consideration. SME status is calculated in accordance to the rules defined in the EU recommendation 2003/361.

Companies associated with the partners of MASTER **CAN** take apply for the MASTER Open Call programme, with the exclusion of entities which are under common control (i.e. the same company management board).

The micro-consortia can be composed either by a single entity, which is mandatory to be a single SME applying to the programme, or by multiple independent entities, from which at least one should be an SME who will take the lead, submit the application and coordinate the application.

#### 3.2 Eligible countries

Only the legal entities established in the following countries and territories (hereafter collectively identified as the "Eligible Countries") will be eligible<sup>6</sup>:

- the Member States of the European Union, including their outermost regions: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.
- the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) linked to the Member States: Aruba (NL), Bonaire (NL), Curaçao (NL), French Polynesia (FR), French Southern and Antarctic Territories (FR), Greenland (DK), New Caledonia (FR), Saba (NL), Saint Barthélemy (FR), Sint Eustatius (NL), Sint Maarten (NL), St. Pierre and Miquelon (FR), Wallis and Futuna Islands (FR).

---

<sup>4</sup> In accordance with the [EU recommendation 2003/361](#)

<sup>5</sup> Large enterprises employ 250 or more people ([EC source](#))

<sup>6</sup> More details for eligibility conditions: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-13-general-annexes\\_horizon-2023-2024\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-13-general-annexes_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf)



- Third countries associated to Horizon Europe<sup>7</sup>; Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo<sup>8</sup>, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom (associated to the entire Programme, with the only exception of the EIC fund<sup>9</sup>, for award procedures implementing Union budget for the year 2024 and onwards<sup>10</sup>).

### 3.3 English language

English is the official language of the MASTER project and is the only acceptable language. In order to be eligible, proposals must be in English and if submitted in any other language, they will not be evaluated.

### 3.4 Multiple submissions

All the eligible organizations could submit more than one applications and participate in different micro-consortia, as long as those applications are different, namely different partnerships, objectives, challenges selected etc.

Additionally, those organizations are able to receive multiple funds by MASTER FSTP programme, provided that they do not exceed the upper funding limit per entity of the three hundred thousand euros (300K EUR). In such case, where more than one proposal involves the same organisation among the selected projects and this organization accumulates less than 300K euros, the application execution team should be dedicated to one application only (one application - one team).

Micro-consortium will not be able to change the entities composition after being selected for funding. Thus, the team members in the submitted application should provide a full written commitment of their exclusive involvement in the selected application and that they will not participate in any other of the selected applications, before signing the sub-grant agreement.

Failing to do so, the application will not be able to participate in the programme and another application will be selected from the reserve list.

### 3.5 Submission system

Only proposals submitted through the Open Call submission page at <https://www.master-xr.eu/open-calls/> and within the Call duration will be accepted. Proposals submitted by any other means, will not be evaluated and will be rejected.

---

<sup>7</sup> The list is correct at the time of adoption of this Work Programme. Please see the [Horizon Europe List of Participating Countries](#) on the Portal for up-to-date information on the current list and on the position for Associated Countries.

<sup>8</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

<sup>9</sup> The UK will participate in all parts of the Horizon Europe programme with the only exception of the EIC Fund (which is part of the EIC Accelerator of Horizon Europe that provides investment through equity or other repayable form).

<sup>10</sup> The transitional arrangements continue to apply to grant award procedures implementing Union budgets 2021 to 2023. However, no Horizon Europe grants will be signed with entities established in the UK for the budgetary appropriations for years 2023 or earlier (even if the grant agreement is signed in 2024 or later), save for exceptional circumstances clearly defined by the work programmes and rules of the Programme (e.g. based on being essential for implementing the action).



Only the information included in the application form will be considered by the Evaluators. It is the applicant's responsibility to include all the necessary information in the application form, respecting the page and margin limits, as well as the font characteristics as they are defined in the template.

The information provided should be accurate, true and complete and should allow the assessment of the proposal.

### **3.6 Deadline**

Applications must be submitted until the closing time and date published in the 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call. The closing time recorded by the MASTER Platform for this call is 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2024, at 17:00 (CET - Brussels local time).

### **3.7 Absence of conflict of interest**

Each member of micro-consortium shall declare any potential conflict of interest with the MASTER partners. All cases of potential conflict of interest will be assessed case by case.

Each member of micro-consortium must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the action is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interest'). Notably, to avoid conflicts of interest, applications will not be accepted from organizations who are partners in the MASTER consortium and its affiliated and related entities or entities in which MASTER partners have shares or other interest.

Each member of a micro-consortium will be required to declare that they know of no such potential conflicts of interest that would prevent them from applying.

### **3.8 Other**

It is taken for granted that each member of a micro-consortium who is involved in the programme confirms the following statements:

- It is not under liquidation or is not an enterprise under difficulty according to the Commission Regulation No 651/2014, art. 2.18,
- the background (information and knowledge, including inventions, databases, etc.) relevant to the project is held by the applicant prior to their accession to the MASTER 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call, as well as any intellectual property rights which are needed for carrying out the project or for using foreground,
- that the potential results would not infringe third parties' rights, namely patents,
- is not excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law, or by a decision of national or EU authority,
- activities under the application must have an exclusive focus on civil applications.

Additionally, each member of a micro-consortium must confirm that all the Research and Innovation activities carried out by them under Horizon Europe will comply with ethical principles and relevant national, Union and international legislation, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights and its Supplementary Protocols.



Particular attention shall be paid to the principle of proportionality, the right to privacy, the right to the protection of personal data, the right to the physical and mental integrity of a person, the right to non-discrimination and the need to ensure high levels of human health protection.

Each member of a micro-consortium must carry out the action in compliance with:

- (a) ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity) and
- (b) applicable international, EU and national law.

Funding will not be granted for activities carried out outside the EU if they are prohibited in all Member States or for activities which destroy human embryos.

Each member of a micro-consortium must ensure that the activities under the action have a primary focus on civil applications.

Applicants are required to assess the ethical implications of their proposed work at the proposal submission stage and describe them in the application form, particularly with regard to:

- the use of data that is potentially traceable to a person,
- the use of, or interaction with, vulnerable individuals and groups,
- potential physical or mental harm to operators, users and / or third parties,
- the development of systems liable to maintain or amplify societal disadvantage or discrimination based on race, gender, sexuality, social class or economic standing.

Where potential issues are identified, the applicant(s) is required to detail any mitigating actions that will be implemented.

Moreover, each micro-consortium member must take all reasonable measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in the implementation of the action. They must aim, to the extent possible, for a gender balance at all levels of personnel assigned to the action, including supervisory and managerial level.

The MASTER consortium confirms that any information provided during the submission phase will be kept confidential, while confidentiality with the successfully selected applications will be covered by the sub-grant agreement that will be signed at the beginning of the application.



## 4 Preparation and submission of the proposals

Proposals must be submitted only through the submission system provided by MASTER (<https://www.master-xr.eu/open-calls/>). The submission period will last for more than 2 months, which is the minimum period set by the EC. Applicants will have to identify the specific challenge they are answering to. No late submissions, namely after the deadline set in the Call, will be accepted. Applications submitted by any other means will not be considered for funding.

The application forms submitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call will include the following sections:

1. Cover Page
  - a. Basic information for the application
  - b. Targeted challenge of the application (only one can be selected)
  - c. Legal information for the coordinator and application members
  - d. Consortium composition
  - e. Project abstract
2. (Scored) Scientific / Technological Excellence
3. (Scored) Impact
4. (Scored) Implementation
5. IP and Ethical Issues

Additionally, in the submission system, the coordinator should provide an informed consent form on behalf of all the entities involved in the micro-consortium, confirming that they have read, understood and agreed with the information provided in the Open Call documents, as well as declare any potential conflict of interest, if exists.

Additional material, which has not been included and specifically requested in the online application form, will not be considered for the evaluation of the proposals. Data not included in proposals will not be taken into account.

The MASTER consortium will make their best effort to keep all provided data confidential; however, to leave no room for doubt, the applicant is solely responsible for indicating their confidential information as such.



## 5 Summary of evaluation process

The implementation of the evaluation and selection process is done after the submission deadline.

### 5.1 Evaluators

MASTER will be supported by an external, independent, and ideally gender balanced Experts Panel for the evaluation process. The tentative composition of each panel is: **one expert from academia** (RTO, University) with background in XR or/and Robotics and **one from Industry or Education sector**, depending on the Open Call.

A rigorous and transparent evaluator selection process will be applied: experts could be proposed by each project partner based on their scientific or industrial competences and experience. LMS will lead the recruitment process with the support of the rest of partners in “Task 3.1 Open Call launch preparation”. The support of the more relevant platforms and associations will be requested, in particular, those where MASTER partners are already members (LMS is a member of TRINITY, TEK is member of BDIH in the Basque Country), euRobotics (LMS, TEK, DFKI) and XR4Europe association, EfVET.

A pool of at least 24 experts will be created before the Evaluation process begins.

After the assignment of proposals to experts, they will sign a non-disclosure and a non-conflict-of-interest agreement and enter a contract with the **MASTER** project coordinator.

The **financial distribution** of the allocated budget for each expert will be made by LMS according to the number of Proposals evaluated by the Expert. A budget of 40.000€ has been allocated for this purpose.

The payment will be done at the completion of the evaluation activity.

### 5.2 Evaluation criteria

The evaluation form with the detailed criteria will be prepared in Task 3.1. It will include the key aspects to be considered for the 3 evaluation criteria:

<b>EXCELLENCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soundness and pertinence of the project goals with the challenges proposed in the call</li> <li>• Credibility of the targeted technological, industrial, educational KPIs to measure the results</li> <li>• Concreteness of the technical approach and the methodology</li> <li>• Integrability in the open platform</li> </ul>
<b>IMPACT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to a significant improvement of sustainability and competitiveness.</li> <li>• Contribution to the objectives of MASTER and hence to the European XR ecosystem</li> <li>• Credibility of impact KPI targets defined in the proposal.</li> </ul>



<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soundness of the work plan, including relevance of the tasks and the timing of activities.</li> <li>• Applicants' capacity to implement the proposal</li> <li>• If the application is submitted by a small consortium, the complementarity of the participants.</li> </ul>
-----------------------	---

### 5.3 Scoring

Evaluators will assign a score value between 0 to 5 to each criterion:

0	1	2	3	4	5
•FAILURE	•VERY POOR	•POOR	•ACCEPTABLE	•GOOD	•VERY GOOD

- **0:** The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.
- **1:** Very Poor – The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- **2:** Poor – While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses.
- **3:** Acceptable – The proposal addresses the criterion, although significant improvements are possible.
- **4:** Good – The proposal addresses the criterion well, although certain improvements are still possible.
- **5:** Very Good – The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

The following conditions will apply:

- The final score given to each criterion will be the average of the scores given by the two evaluators.
- In case of clear scoring discrepancy between evaluators of a proposal (3 points difference at least in one of 3 evaluation sections), the consortium will organize an internal meeting to discuss and decide about the discrepancies.
- To be eligible, proposals shall score at least 3 points in each criterion and have an overall score of at least 10 points.

### 5.4 Proposal submission

Proposals will be submitted through the submission system provided by MASTER. The submission period will be open for 3 months. LMS will provide the platform to submit the proposals.

Applicants will have to identify the specific challenge they are answering to.

No late submissions will be accepted after the deadline set in the Call.

### 5.5 Evaluation workflow

The selection of beneficiaries will follow this process:



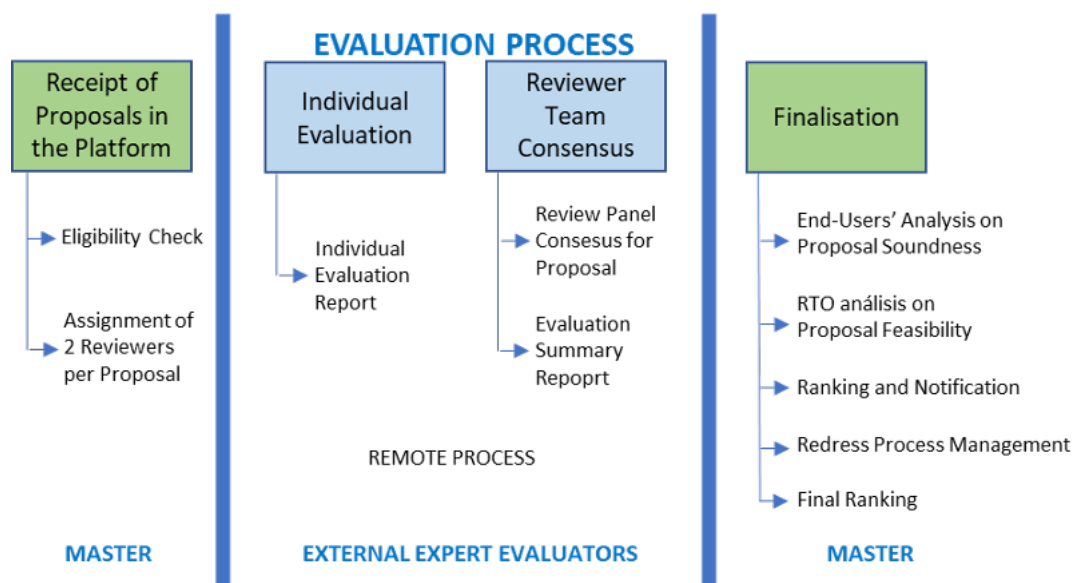


Figure 2. Beneficiaries selection process

**Two independent experts** will evaluate each proposal according to the criteria and scoring explained in previous sections.

The evaluators will be provided with a document with the evaluation guidelines to assess the proposals and the evaluation criteria.

Some of the activities foreseen are:

- a. The **Eligibility check** will be performed internally by consortium members (completeness of information, eligibility of the proposers)
- b. Assignment of proposals to the experts (reviewers).
  - a. **Two independent experts** will evaluate each proposal.
  - b. One of the two evaluators per proposal will be nominated as the rapporteur in charge of providing the ESR
  - c. Experts will be provided with 1) briefing training sessions via webinar, and 2) a clear evaluation guideline to assess the proposals according to the criteria and the purpose of the project,
- c. Review and rating of proposals by the experts will be done remotely.
- d. Once each proposal has been reviewed by the 2 experts, if there is a clear discrepancy between reviewers, a consensus audio meeting will be held.
- e. The rapporteur will prepare the ESR, Evaluation Summary Report, including the scores and evaluators' feedback.
- f. Once proposals have been ranked, and considering only proposals with scores above threshold, MASTER will try to allocate equal numbers of proposals to every challenge, selecting the highest ranked proposals for each challenge.



- g. Applicants will receive the ESR and the initial decision on funding or not.
- h. Applicants will have one week to submit a redress document. MASTER will analyse the redress documents, make a decision and answer to the redressers within an additional week.
- i. The final decision will be communicated to the EC and the applicants.



## **6 Applicants communication flow**

### **6.1 General communication procedure**

The applicants will receive communication after each step of the evaluation process indicating whether they passed the respective stage. Eliminated applicants will receive feedback including the reasons for exclusion (sent to e-mail registered as the owner of the application).

### **6.2 Appeal procedure**

If, at any stage of the evaluation process, an applicant considers that a formal mistake has been made or that evaluators have failed to comply with the rules of this 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call, and that his/her interests have been prejudiced as a result, the following appeal procedures are available. A complaint should be drawn up in English and submitted by email to [info@master-xr.eu](mailto:info@master-xr.eu). Complaints should be made within 7 (seven) calendar days after the date of the receipt of evaluation communication from MASTER.

Any complaint after the receipt of evaluation communication from the MASTER consortium should include:

- contact details (including e-mail address),
- the subject of the complaint,
- a redress document which will contain information and evidence regarding the alleged breach.

Anonymous or late complaints will not be reviewed.

As a general rule, MASTER consortium will investigate the complaints with a view to arriving at a decision to issue a formal notice or to close the case within no more than 7 (seven) days from the date of the reception of the complaint, provided that all required information has been submitted by the complainant. Experts assessing the complainant's experiment during the last stage, when it was excluded from the MASTER project, will not be involved in investigating the complaint.



## 7 Obligations of FSTP beneficiaries

Each selected applicant will sign the 'MASTER Sub-Grant Agreement' with the MASTER consortium. The funds awarded under the Sub-Grant Agreement are provided directly from the funds of the European Project MASTER and are therefore funds owned by the European Commission: Management of the MASTER funds have been transferred to the project partners in MASTER via the European Commission, Grant Agreement number 824990. The 'MASTER Sub-Grant Agreement' will include a set of obligations that FSTP beneficiaries have towards the European Commission. It is the task of FSTP beneficiaries to satisfy these obligations and of the MASTER consortium partners to inform FSTP beneficiaries about them.

An exemplary set of obligations:

- obligation to submit to any control measures (checks, reviews, audits or investigations) in relation to the participation in MASTER project,
- obligation to keep records,
- obligation to provide information to the Coordinator or EC or other Consortium Members in order to verify proper implementation of the action and compliance with any other obligation,
- liability for damages.



## 8 Implementation of the programme

The execution of winning projects proposed by third parties (Experiments) will last for 9 months in each open call. For the applications in OC1, the 9-month execution period will include the **development** of technologies, their **integration** with the technologies developed by MASTER partners and their validation. For each open call, the last 2 months will include the **technical validation** of the results. Partners from the MASTER consortium will provide **technical mentoring** to each experiment during the whole execution period.

OC1 experiments will receive **business development support** during the last 4 months of their experiment execution period. **MASTER** will establish a formal and periodic mechanism to monitor the progress of the experiments and evaluate the excellence and market potential of their applications.



## **9 Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)**

### **9.1 IPR ownership of the sub-granted projects**

The ownership of all IPR created by the FSTP beneficiaries, via the MASTER funding, will remain with them. Results are owned by the Party that generates them. The Sub-Grant Agreement will introduce provisions concerning joint ownership of the results of the sub-granted projects.

### **9.2 Communication obligations**

There are no IPR obligations toward the European Commission (EC). However, any FSTP beneficiaries' communication or publication shall clearly indicate that the project has received funding from the European Union and the MASTER program, therefore displaying the EU and MASTER logo on all printed and digital materials, including websites and press releases. Moreover, FSTP beneficiaries will agree that certain information regarding the projects selected for funding can be used by MASTER consortium for communication purposes.



## 10 Support for the applicants

For more information about the MASTER Open Call, please check at <https://www.master-xr.eu/open-calls/>

For further information on the 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call, in case of any doubts regarding the eligibility rules or the information that is to be provided in the Application Form, please contact us at [info@master-xr.eu](mailto:info@master-xr.eu).

When contacting the MASTER consortium in the above mail, please include the following information in your email message:

- your name, telephone number and your email address.
- details of the enquiry or the specific problem (error messages you encountered, bugs descriptions, i.e. if a dropdown list is not working, etc.).
- screenshots of the problem, if existing.



## 11 Timeline

The following timeline will be followed for the MASTER 1<sup>st</sup> Open Call programme:

- Open Call announcement: 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024
- Submission period of applications: 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2024, at 09:00 (CET) – 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2024, at 17:00 (CET)
- Evaluation period: 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2024
  - Eligibility check by MASTER consortium: 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2024 – 7<sup>th</sup> of June 2024
  - Evaluation of submitted applications by external – independent reviewers: 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2024 – 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2024
  - Allocation of equal numbers of proposals to every challenge by MASTER consortium: 1<sup>st</sup> of July – 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2024
  - Notification of the applicants – Initial decision: 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2024 – 12<sup>th</sup> of July 2024
  - Redressing period: 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2024 – 19<sup>th</sup> of July 2024
  - Reply to the redressers by the MASTER consortium: 20<sup>th</sup> of July 2024 – 26<sup>th</sup> of July 2024
  - Notification of the applicants – Final decision: 27<sup>th</sup> of July 2024 – 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2024
  - Sharing the above list with the EC: 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2024
- Contract preparation & signing period with kick-off workshop: 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2024 – 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2024
- Application execution period: 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2024 – 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2025
  - Development of the proposed solution period: 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2024 – 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2025
  - Integration to MASTER-XR platform: 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2025 – 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2025
  - Technical validation: 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2025 – 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2025



## **12 Applicable law**

Any matters not covered by this Guide for Applicants will be governed by Belgian law and the law of the European Union.





## 13 Glossary

RIA: Research and Innovation Action

EC: European Commission

TRL: Technology Readiness Level ([definition](#))

OC: Open Call



## **14 Annexes**

### **14.1 Annex 1: Informed consent form**

Separate file.

### **14.2 Annex 2: Processing of personal data**

Separate file.

### **14.3 Annex 3: Call Announcement**

Separate file.

### **14.4 Annex 4: Challenges definition**

Separate file.

### **14.5 Annex 5: Eligible and ineligible costs**

Separate file.

### **14.6 Annex 6: General Requirements**

Separate file.

### **14.7 Annex 7: Application Form**

Separate file.

