



2nd Open Call

Guideline for Applicants



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Acronyms, Abbreviations & Terms

Acronym	Definition
EEN	Enterprise Europe Network
EU	European Union
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SMP	Single Market Programme
Client / EEN client	Any SME engaging with EEN and receiving advanced, tailored support by EEN advisors

1 Introduction

This document provides guidance and information for applicants interested in applying to the 2nd open call of the EENergy project, including information regarding the eligibility criteria, the application and selection process, as well as the responsibilities of all applicants. It is strongly recommended that interested applicants read this document in its entirety in order to ensure a fully suitable and eligible application.

2 Open Call Description

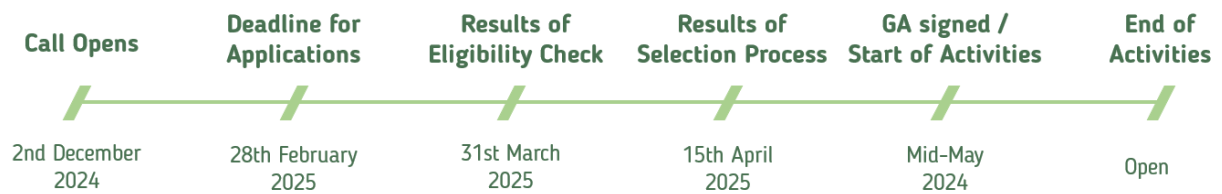


Figure 1: Expected timings for key milestones in the EENergy 2nd Open Call

The open call described in this document is open from 2nd December 2024 and will close on 28th February 2025 at 17:00 CET. Following the call closure, all applications will be checked for eligibility, followed by the selection process, and contracting with the funded beneficiaries, after which the project implementation plan can begin. The energy efficiency benchmarking reports will also be made available to all eligible applicants at this time. The planned schedule of the call is shown in Figure 1.

The EENergy Open Call is open to any SME incorporated before 01.01.2024, that is operating and registered in a country that is part of the EU's Single Market Program. This restriction ensures that SMEs have a baseline energy consumption performance period of at least 1 calendar year, necessary to fulfil the approach of the open call. Detailed eligibility and exclusionary criteria are further described in section 2.4.

2.1 Involvement of the EEN Sustainability Advisors

The EEN Sustainability Advisors are qualified EEN advisors with the ability to identify and address sustainability challenges and opportunities for SMEs. The EEN Sustainability Advisors act as the key point of contact for sustainability issues within each EEN region and are well-placed to advise SMEs on new sustainable business models, circular economy, and resource efficiency topics, as well as linking SMEs to complementary forms of support and more specialised advice provided in the immediate business ecosystem. For this reason, the cooperation between applying SMEs and the EEN Sustainability Advisors is a core aspect of the EENergy project and the open call. This approach provides a benefit for companies engaging in the call in two dimensions:

1. **All beneficiaries** will:

- receive advice from their sustainability advisor to develop an **EEN action plan** which covers their wider energy efficiency needs.
 - become part of the EENergy beneficiary community, contributing directly to the learnings of the pilot action and receiving continued support to further improve their sustainability and energy efficiency behaviour.
 - receive direct support for growth and improvement of energy efficiency thanks to the engagement with the EEN sustainability advisors, including support to find sources of financing to fund energy efficiency activities, as well as providing them with the benchmark reports to identify areas of improvement.
2. **A subset of the beneficiaries** (up to 900 SMEs across the two open calls) will directly financially benefit from EENergy by receiving financial support to carry out their **EENergy Implementation Plan**. The implementation plan will be in most cases a subset of the EEN action plan within the €10.000 available.

All applicants must engage with an EEN sustainability advisor in their region / country.¹ **This is a prerequisite to be eligible for the open call.** The sustainability advisor will perform an assessment of the applicant's energy efficiency needs, help formulate an EEN action plan, support the client to define a suitable **EENergy Implementation Plan** in line with the call guidelines, and provide support throughout the EENergy open call, including with the application process, activity implementation, and data collection. This is described in more detail in section 3.

2.2 Eligible Activities

2.2.1 Financial Support to Selected Eligible SMEs

Financial support of up to **€10,000** will be allocated to the funded beneficiaries. These funds provided by EENergy must be used to carry out their **EENergy implementation plan** which results in improved energy efficiency for the beneficiary SME. The contractual aim of the activities is to achieve a 5% reduction in energy consumption within the relevant scope of the action as described in section 2.2.1.2.

2.2.1.1 Implementation Plan Content

Investment, consultancy, and training actions are all eligible for funding in the EENergy 2nd Open Call.

The **investment** definition covers the implementation, acquisition, purchase, and/or installation of new software, hardware, equipment, or other technologies. Some examples include:

- Contributions to the purchase and installation of renewable energy systems such as solar panels, wind turbines, invertors, storage systems or any other relevant equipment.
- The implementation of energy optimisation / management software on a production line.
- The replacement of an old boiler with a modern one using more efficient technologies.
- The replacement of outdated power supply units with modern and effective ones.

The **consultancy** and **training** categories cover advisory & consultancy services, energy audits, training & upskilling activities, and other comparable activities aimed at identifying energy efficiency improvements or improving the general energy efficiency characteristics. For example:

¹ <https://een.ec.europa.eu/local-contact-points>

- Performing a detailed needs analysis for the SME beneficiary and defining a detailed investment roadmap for energy efficiency improvement which leads to a 5% energy reduction.
- Conducting an energy audit with the goal of identifying and implementing an action leading to a 5% reduction in a relevant scope.
- Engaging an expert to evaluate feasibility of equipment installation or to perform regulatory checks, in combination with the implementation of the investment.
- Training for employees on best practices, awareness, regulatory aspects, and behavioural change related to energy efficiency.

2.2.1.2 Implementation plan scope

The realization of the implementation plan and the achievement of the 5% energy reduction is to be evaluated in the context of a **relevant scope** corresponding to the boundaries of the action. This scope can range from something as narrow as a single piece of equipment, to as wide as the entire firm. By definition, certain types of investments must be associated with certain scopes:

- Energy reductions achieved through investments in machinery replacement or upgrades may be measured on a smaller scope, such as a piece of equipment, or on a production line, since the reduction achieved through such an investment can be directly measured within such a scope.
- Investments in conditioning systems or building upgrades can only be measured within the scope of a building or the entire firm, since by definition, such investments impact these scopes correspondingly.

Combinations of activity types are possible, however in these cases they must together form a **coherent** implementation plan where all activities contribute towards the achievement of the 5% energy reduction within the scope of the implementation plan.

- For an investment in a new piece of equipment, combined with a training program for employees for operation of this investment, **the 5% reduction can be reported on at the equipment level**, since the training is directly contributing to the achievement of the energy reduction by enabling employees to operate the new equipment.
- For an investment in a new piece of equipment, combined with a training program for general behavioural change within the company, **the 5% reduction can only be reported on a building or company level**, since the training part of the implementation plan is not contributing to the energy reduction on the equipment level.

This flexibility is provided in order to allow SMEs of different sizes, geographical locations, and industries, to appropriately define a relevant scope within which a 5% reduction is achievable with the available funds. It should however be noted that the impact evaluation will measure impacts at the company level. **Thus, it is strongly encouraged to submit coherent and realistic implementation plans that would produce detectable impacts at this level.**

2.2.1.3 Multiple activities

Implementation plans with multiple cost items are eligible, but the cost items must be coherent with each other if a unit scope smaller than the company is selected. For example, upgrading two pieces of equipment in a single production line is eligible, as long as the combined energy reduction achieved represents at least 5% across the production line.

Example: Client A has a production line which an annual consumption of 20.000 kWh / year. Client A plans to use the EENergy funds to replace a compressor on the production line, which consumes 4.000 kWh / year with a more efficient version, consuming 3.000 kWh / year. Additionally, they replace a bandsaw, which consumes 1.000 kWh / year, with a more efficient version consuming 800 kWh / year. As a result of these investments, the annual consumption of the production line decreases from 20.000 kWh / year to 18.800 kWh / year, a reduction of 6% -> **This plan is eligible since the overall production line consumption decreases by at least 5%.**

Example: Client B has a production line which an annual consumption of 20.000 kWh / year. Client B plans to use the EENergy funds to replace a compressor on the production line, which consumes 4.000 kWh / year with a more efficient version, consuming 3.000 kWh / year. Additionally, they replace a bandsaw, which consumes 1.000 kWh / year, with a more efficient version consuming 970 kWh / year. As a result of these investments, the annual consumption of the production line decreases from 20.000 kWh / year to 18.970 kWh / year, a reduction of 5.15% -> **This plan is eligible. Even though the bandsaw energy reduction is less than 5%, the overall production line consumption decreases by at least 5% making the plan eligible.**

Example: Client C has a production line which an annual consumption of 30.000 kWh / year. Client C plans to use the EENergy funds to replace a compressor on the production line, which consumes 4.000 kWh / year with a more efficient version, consuming 3.000 kWh / year. Additionally, they replace a bandsaw, which consumes 1.000 kWh / year, with a more efficient version consuming 970 kWh / year. As a result of these investments, the annual consumption of the production line decreases from 30.000 kWh / year to 28.970 kWh / year, a reduction of 3,4% -> **This plan is ineligible since the overall production line consumption decreases by less than 5%.**

On the other hand, two or more separate activities (for example, investing in lighting and in a new boiler), are only eligible as long as the scope considered encapsulates both activities and the combined reduction resulting from these investments represents a 5% reduction on this combined level (for example, on a building or company level)

Example: Client D has an annual consumption of their company of 20.000 kWh / year. Client A plans to use the EENergy funds to replace a boiler, which consumes 4.000 kWh / year with a more efficient version, consuming 3.000 kWh / year. Additionally, they replace lighting, which consumes 1.000 kWh / year, with more efficient lighting consuming 200 kWh / year. As a result of these investments, the annual consumption of the company decreases from 20.000 kWh / year to 18.200 kWh / year, a reduction of 9% -> **This plan is eligible since the overall company consumption decreases by at least 5%.**

Example: Client E has an annual consumption of their company of 30.000 kWh / year. Client E plans to use the EENergy funds to replace a boiler, which consumes 4.000 kWh / year with a more efficient version, consuming 3.000 kWh / year. Additionally, they replace lighting, which consumes 1.000 kWh / year, with more efficient lighting consuming 800 kWh / year. As a result of these investments, the annual consumption of the production line decreases from 30.000 kWh / year to 28.800 kWh / year, a reduction of 4% -> **This plan is ineligible since the overall company consumption, which is the only scope covering both activities, decreases by less than 5%.**

Total implementation plan budgets larger than €10.000 are possible, but the overall grant funding to be provided will not exceed **€10,000 per SME**. Hence, an SME may either apply for financing 100% of an activity with a budget up to €10.000, or it may propose a larger activity with a larger budget, to be co-financed from alternative private sources. **However, it must be noted that if selected, the**

submitted implementation plan will form part of the grant agreement with the EENergy project and hence constitute a contractual commitment on the side of the beneficiary. Therefore, applicants and advisors are encouraged to ensure that the company has the necessary resources to fully carry out the EENergy implementation plan even if the total costs exceed the €10.000, since funding can only be approved once the implementation plan is completed.

2.2.1.4 Implementation plan characteristics

In order to be eligible, an EENergy implementation plan must fit the following characteristics:

- **Coherence:** The presented activities must form a coherent implementation plan which all contribute to the improvement of energy efficiency.
- **Quality:** The plan must be sufficiently well described and formulated so that it is clear what activities will be performed since in the case of selection this forms the basis of the contractual agreement between the beneficiary and the EENergy consortium.
- **5% rationale:** The plan must credibly demonstrate the foreseen energy reduction and explain the rationale for this calculation. If the plan involves investments, this rationale must be supported by quantitative references to actual values/data related to the investments. For non-investment actions, the plan must clearly explain how a 5% rationale will be targeted through the design of the actions.
- **Timeframe:** The plan must be realistically implementable within the project timeframe. All implementation costs must be incurred by the end of the reporting period described in section 6 in order to be eligible for reimbursement. The realisation of the 5% energy reduction must also be credibly expected within this timeframe.

To support clients and advisors to assess the suitability of their implementation plans, a logic flow-chart is presented in Figure 2 below. Additionally, a set of template implementation plan examples has been prepared to demonstrate the content of a model eligible EENergy implementation plan. The examples can be found in Annex A of this document.

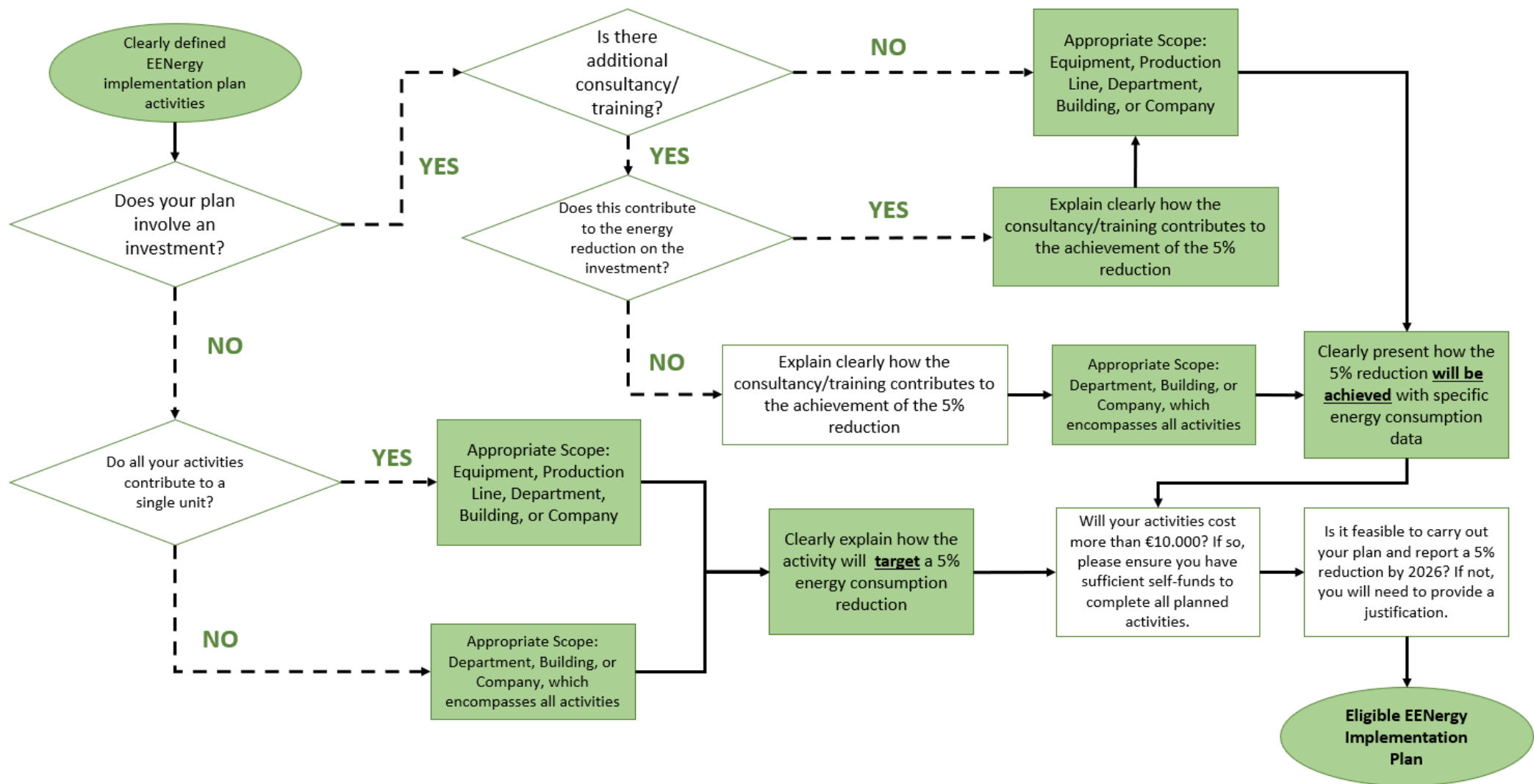


Figure 2: Logic flow chart to evaluate EENergy implementation plan eligibility

2.2.2 Advisory Support to All Eligible SMEs

Independent of the financial support, all eligible applicants shall benefit from all EEN advisory services which support increased energy efficiency activity implementation (e.g., innovation, sustainability, resilience, digitalisation, internationalisation and business partnering, patenting and standardisation, access to finance). All services will be provided in line with the needs of the company. As a qualified, public, neutral, and not for profit support structure, all network nodes provide individualised strategic support on sustainability via sustainability advisors. This advice is **available free of charge** to any eligible applicant under the EENergy call.

An innovative product will be offered to all eligible applicants/, including both funded and regular beneficiaries: the so-called “**benchmark reports**”. The application process for the program includes a detailed feedback mechanism that is activated following the submission of the application. Eligible applicants will receive a comprehensive report based on the information provided during the application stage. Moreover, in addition to this initial report, the firm will receive three additional follow up benchmark reports. To access these reports, the firm needs to provide further information with a focus on its energy consumption. These reports offer a comparative statistical analysis of the firm's energy efficiency performance against others in the same size category, region, and industry. The analysis is tailored to provide insights into the firm's position in relation to its peers, allowing to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement with the EEN advisors. The reports shall encourage informed decision-making and strategic adjustments in the operations of all eligible SMEs.

2.3 Tracking Changes in energy efficiency outcomes

2.3.1 Monitoring Outcomes of the Activities to Fulfil Legal Obligations

The planned activities must be designed to target an energy reduction of at least 5% within the relevant scope. To fulfil the contractual obligations, this reduction will be measured in terms of energy consumption in kWh (or kWh-equivalent units provided by the SME, see section 5.1.1) and will be measured within the appropriate scope of the activity performed. Companies must monitor the energy reduction achieved due to their **EENergy implementation plan** and report this energy data in the corresponding reporting period in order to access the grant funding.

2.3.2 Pilot: Identifying Impacts of Funds to Design More Impactful Programs in Future

A core aspect of EENergy is the impact evaluation study which will run in parallel to the execution of the open call and the activities implementation. This study aims to generate learning for future programming and funding measures. To serve the needs of the study, the final allocation of funds to beneficiaries is conducted through a random selection process amongst eligible actors. This process (described in section 4) ensures fairness (each eligible candidate is treated in same manner) and allows a rigorous evaluation as the funded and regular beneficiaries are ex-ante comparable across many characteristics. The process will help identifying the effectiveness and efficiency of the financial investments and will foster a culture of continuous learning and innovation in program design and

delivery. The relevant outcome data to conduct the impact evaluation will be collected in the course of the program implementation and after its completion.

2.4 Eligibility Criteria

The EENergy open call is open to any legal entity which fulfils the following criteria:

- It is established and operational in one of the countries participating in the EU's single market program which includes:
 - The EU member states².
 - The SMP COSME Strand: **Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway**
 - EU Acceding countries, candidate countries, potential candidates, and European Neighbourhood Policy Countries which participate in the SMP: **Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye, and Ukraine.**
- It is an SME as described by the European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC³, and the SME user guide,⁴ the main considerations being that the legal entity:
 - Is an enterprise, i.e., engaged in an economic activity,
AND
 - Has a staff headcount of less than 250 full-time equivalents,
AND
 - Has an annual turnover of €50 Million or less,
OR
 - Has a balance sheet total of €43 Million or less,For any non-independent entities (i.e., those with a shareholding in other enterprises, or those that have other enterprises within their own shareholding structure), the above criteria must be assessed according to the methodology set out in the SME user guide. In case of any doubt, your EEN advisor can help to clarify the SME status during the determination of the implementation plan. However, it remains the responsibility of the applicant to assess and clarify this.
- It was incorporated and operational before 01.01.2024.
 - This restriction ensures that SMEs have a baseline energy consumption performance period of at least 1 calendar year, necessary to fulfil the approach of the open call. Furthermore, SMEs should have energy consumption data available which corresponds to this period.
- It has and provides a valid VAT number or registration number.
- It is engaged with the Enterprise Europe Network and has developed an EENergy Implementation plan together with an EEN Sustainability Advisor that is referenced in the application form.
 - **New EEN clients, i.e., those who have not previously worked with the EEN are also eligible and encouraged.** For these interested SMEs that are currently not in the

² Applicants from Hungary are nominally eligible, but should take extra care to ensure they are not excluded for funding on the basis of European Council Implementing Decision 2022/2506

³ European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC.

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:124:0036:0041:en:PDF>

⁴ SME definition: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/756d9260-ee54-11ea-991b-01aa75ed71a1>

Enterprise Europe Network, please find and contact the local contact point in your country/region at the following link: <https://een.ec.europa.eu/local-contact-points>.

- **It has not submitted an eligible application to the 1st EENergy Open Call.**
 - Companies who submitted an application to the 1st EENergy Open Call and passed the eligibility check cannot receive funding in the 2nd Open Call, regardless of the outcome of the selection process in the 1st call. All eligible clients from the 1st call are already part of the ongoing impact evaluation study and can benefit from the regular services from EENergy.
 - Companies who submitted an application to the 1st EENergy Open Call, but did not pass the eligibility check, are eligible for funding in the 2nd call. We encourage clients with ineligible applications from the 1st call to contact the EENergy helpdesk to understand the reason for the non-eligibility decision, so this can be corrected in the upcoming resubmission.
- It is not in financial difficulty, bankrupt, in a liquidation or winding up process, having its affairs administered by courts, or any similar situation according to the Commission Regulation No 651/2014, art. 2.18.
- It is not excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law, or by a decision of both national or EU authority.
- It has fully filled-in the application form where applicable.
- It agrees to provide information for follow-up data collections to support the impact assessment study.

For the complete avoidance of doubt, both funded and regular beneficiaries of the 1st EENergy Open Call (any eligible applicant) cannot participate in the 2nd EENergy Open Call. Any applications received from such companies will be disqualified from the selection process.

2.5 Energy Intensive Industries

The 2nd EENergy open call places an increased focus on companies active in Energy Intensive Industries (EII). The definition of EII has been updated to include companies where:

- **The nature of the main economic activity is manufacturing (including processing).**

AND

- **The company is engaged economically active in one of the defined EII industries**

The following industries are considered to be energy intensive:

- Agriculture
- Basic Metals including Ferro-Alloys & Silicon, Non-Ferrous Metals, and Steel
- Ceramics & Refractory Products
- Cement
- Chemicals & Chemical Products
- Coke & Refined Petroleum Products
- Computers, Electronics & Optics
- Concrete, Cement & Plaster
- Construction
- Electrical Equipment

- Fabricated Metal Products
- Fertilizers
- Food & Beverages
- Furniture
- Glass
- Machinery & Equipment
- Motor Vehicles & Other Transport Equipment
- Other Non-Metallic Minerals
- Pharmaceuticals
- Pulp & Paper
- Refining
- Rubber & Plastics
- Textiles & Leather
- Water Collection, Treatment & Supply & Sewage
- Wood

OR

- **At least 40% of the company's total costs (energy, goods, materials, services) are energy costs.**

3 Open Call Process

3.1 Application Overview

Applying for and carrying out an EENergy grant comprises several steps:

1. Definition of an EEN implementation plan via a mandatory assessment with the local EEN Sustainability Advisor.
2. Submission of an application for an EENergy grant.
3. Confirmation of the application by the responsible EEN Sustainability Advisor.
4. Eligibility check, and provision of benchmark reports for all eligible firms.
5. Selection of funded and eligible beneficiaries.
6. Implementation of the action.
7. Reporting and documentation of the action and sharing of corresponding outcome data.
8. Grant payment.

The overall logic is displayed in Figure 3.

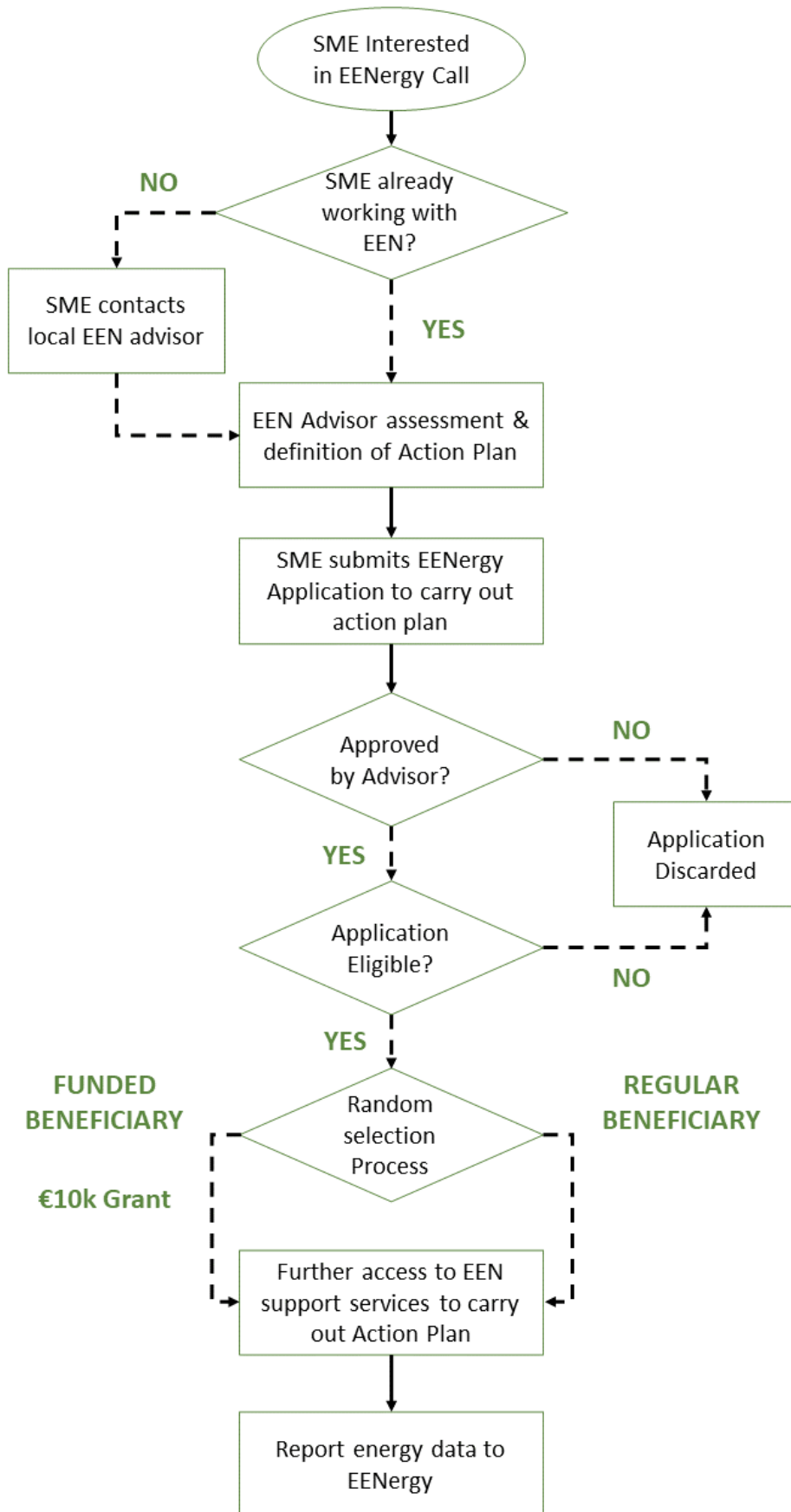


Figure 3: Overview of the overall process for the EENergy open call

The application process itself consists of two major steps.

3.1.1 Step 1: Engage with the EEN to define an Implementation plan and to Prepare for the Application

The first step for any SME interested in applying to the EENergy open call is to get in contact with their local EEN contact point and speak to an EEN Sustainability Advisor. Applicants should contact their existing EEN network partner to get in touch with a relevant Sustainability Advisor. SMEs who are not existing EEN clients can contact their local EEN organisation through this link: <https://een.ec.europa.eu/local-contact-points>. The local EEN Sustainability Advisor will support the applying SME by performing a needs analysis and providing advice on suitable energy efficiency measures to be deployed. This mandatory assessment will be carried out according to a standardised procedure and toolset developed specifically for the EENergy project. Albania, Liechtenstein and Moldova, while SMP countries, are not currently represented by an EEN organisation. Applicants from Albania, Liechtenstein and Moldova should contact the nearest EEN organisation for further support.

3.1.2 Step 2: Fill out the Application Form

The application form for the EENergy consists of five sections:

Consent

This section provides an introduction to the programme and outlines your rights as a participant of the study to estimate the causal impact of the financial support. The study will provide key learning to inform and improve any similar future opportunities or funding programmes. In order to participate in the programme, applying SMEs must confirm that they have read, and agree to 1) relevant General Data Protection Regulation guidelines, 2) relevant Privacy Policy guidelines and, 3) the processing of personal data. In addition, participating SMEs, regardless of whether funding is received, must commit to participating in an additional survey in January 2026. For funded beneficiaries, this survey will be combined with the reporting period for their actions (see section 6.2)

Company Background Information

This module of the application form aims to collect background information about the SME including the SME's main points of contact, their contact details and the name and contact details of the EEN sustainability advisor supporting the SME's application, including the email address which will be required for approving the eligibility of the application.

Background on Main Investment Site and Request

Within this module of the application, applying SMEs must provide information related to the company site/location where the implementation plan will be carried out / where the grant funding will be spent. Questions will also include the SME's 1) country of registration, 2) date of registration, 3) industrial sector and 4) number of employees. Additionally, companies will be asked to answer several questions relating to their current energy situation, in terms of both energy usage and related costs, as well as information regarding their existing approach to the topic of energy efficiency. As part of this section, SMEs will be required to upload an energy bill (related to the main company site/location where the implementation plan will be carried out) from Q4 2024. This can be uploaded as one quarterly bill from for the Quarter 4 of 2024 (summarising information for October, November, and December 2024), OR as separate monthly bills from October 2024, November 2024, and December 2024. This information will be core for the benchmarking reports and will be tracked over time.

Details on Request for Funding

As part of this section, applying SMEs must specify under which categories (the proposed investment action will fall, and provide a clear rationale and explanation for the envisaged energy reduction to be achieved. The applicant must also provide a brief description of the planned activities and explain how they relate to their implementation plan.

Declarations

In the final section of this application form, applicants must provide several declarations committing to fulfilling the responsibilities as described in section 5.

All applications must be made in English and all mandatory parts of the application must be completed. Applications submitted in other languages, or incomplete applications, will be discarded during the eligibility check procedure and will not be considered for funding. SMEs can submit a maximum of one proposal to the call. If more than one proposal is submitted, only the most recently submitted proposal before the call deadline will be considered in the eligibility check and selection process. Applications can continue to be edited up until the call deadline on **28th February 2025, 17:00 CET (Brussels Time)**.

3.2 Grant Management Platform

All EENergy applications must be made and processed through the dedicated **EENergy Good Grants** grant management platform. The platform can be accessed through this link: <https://eenergy.grantplatform.com/>

Interested applicants must:

1. **Register** in the system using a valid email address.
2. Once registration is completed, applicants will have access to the application form. Applicants **must complete the application form** including all necessary declarations and submit the application through the platform. Applications received via **other means will not be considered** for selection.
 - a. Note, the grant platform supports the saving of draft versions of the application, i.e., applicants are able to save their application status, exit the platform, and return at a later point to continue working on the application.
 - b. However, the existence of a draft application is not a substitute for a submitted application, i.e., applicants must complete and submit the application to be considered for funding.
3. After submission, the named sustainability advisor will receive an automated email (to the email address provided in the application form) asking them to confirm whether (or not) that the SME in question has been supported in developing an implementation plan with the advisor. This serves as a check to ensure only those clients who have worked with their EEN advisor on an implementation plan are considered in the next steps of the process. **The sustainability advisor must confirm the application** by clicking on the relevant link in the email, otherwise the application may be discarded. Only when this has been confirmed by the sustainability advisor, via the link shared in the automated email, will the application be officially submitted for eligibility approval. **Applicants should follow up with their sustainability advisor** to ensure that their application gets confirmed.

4. After the confirmation by the sustainability advisor, the **applicants will receive confirmation** that their application has been successfully received and a further confirmation email once the advisor has provided authorisation to move to the next step of the evaluation process.
5. Thereafter, all **applicants will receive communication about the results of the eligibility assessment**. All applicants will be **informed about the outcome of their application**.
6. SMEs selected as **funded beneficiaries will enter the contract management phase**. This phase which will also be coordinated through the platform. During this phase, various features will be available on the grant management platform including reporting of the grant utilisation (with the opportunity to share relevant data, upload deliverables, and proof of payments), and tracking of grant fund payment.
7. Eligible SMEs (independent of the funding selection) **will be recontacted to provide further information on their energy consumption**. Note, as part of the pilot evaluation study, all eligible SMEs – independent of the funding – must commit to provide data on energy efficiency outcomes in further rounds of data collections (see section 5.1).

3.3 Support & Help

A list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) is available on the grant platform website at <https://eenergy.grantplatform.com/>. Should applicants have any questions or queries related to the cooperation with the EEN sustainability advisors, the application process, the eligibility check, the selection process, or other details related to the open call, they are requested to first review the FAQ list. This list will be continuously updated during the call opening period with any other FAQs.

If the applicant's query is not covered within the FAQ list, a dedicated helpdesk is available for any other questions. Applicants can reach the call helpdesk through the email address: EENergy@lic.it. A dedicated helpdesk team will monitor all communications to this address and either answer queries directly or connect enquiries with appropriate contact people from the EENergy consortium or the EEN.

4 Selection Process

All applications which are deemed eligible will be subject to a selection process through which the funded beneficiary and regular beneficiary SMEs will be selected. A stratified randomisation will be used for the selection. At least 229 companies will be selected for funding with at least 67 companies being active in energy intensive industries (EII).

Given that the appropriate proportions of EII and non-EII clients apply, then the selection will be performed via a randomised lottery with all applicants being treated equally. Furthermore, the randomisation will aim to ensure statistically similarity between the funded and regular beneficiary groups according to these criteria. In order to fairly distribute the available resources and to facilitate the impact evaluation study, the final eligible group of applicants will be randomly split into funded beneficiary and regular beneficiary groups.

The randomisation will further aim to ensure a consistent success rate on an EEN-organisation level. **However, the exact distribution of the funded beneficiaries is highly dependent on the nature of the applicant pool and no guarantees can be made regarding the success chances on an organisation level.**

5 Applicant's Responsibilities

SMEs submitting an application to the EENergy Open Call must commit to fulfilling certain responsibilities related to the sharing of data and material, for purposes of statistical comparison, dissemination, and communication activities.

5.1 Commitments for All Applicants

5.1.1 Sharing Data for Pilot Study

SMEs consent to be part of the pilot impact evaluation study and will receive benchmark reports to assess improvements in energy efficiency over time and across the two types of beneficiaries (funded and regular). Thus, to support the learning process of this programme, ALL SMEs must provide accurate and complete information as part of the application form. Furthermore, ALL SMEs, regardless of whether they receive funding, must commit to participating in, and accurately completing, a short firm level survey planned for January 2026. The World Bank will work with sustainability advisors, via relevant consortia, to monitor, promote, and facilitate the completion of these surveys. Thereby, the applicants shall provide the same background information of the same type and level of detail as requested in the application form.

By accepting the conditions of the application form, the applicants agree to provide energy efficiency data for the pilot study regardless of the outcome of the selection process. This information shall create rigorous scientific evidence – beyond the EENergy program - on whether and to which extent additional funding improves energy efficiency outcomes.

5.2 Commitments for Funded Beneficiaries

5.2.1 Monitoring Outcomes of the Activities to Fulfil Legal Obligations: Reporting Progress over Time

SMEs selected for funding (funded beneficiaries) will have additional responsibilities associated with reporting the progress and outcomes of the implementation of their funded energy efficiency activities.

Following the completion of the activity implementation, **each funded beneficiary must report the implementation and outcome of the activity**. This is a prerequisite for the payment of the grant to be approved. In particular, activity-relevant data must be reported **which must credibly demonstrate the implementation of the implementation plan and a 5% or greater energy reduction**. The reporting will include:

- Definition of the scope of the action (e.g., as specified in section 2.3.1) to specify the context in which the action is performed.

- Proof of expenditure via certifications / invoices / reports / manufacturers' declarations proving the implementation of the action
- Energy bills, consumption data, or other means to prove a 5%+ consumption reduction related to the defined scope.

The standards and guidelines for reporting are described Annex B of this guideline. This data will be requested from funded beneficiaries by means of an online reporting tool, which will be made available ahead of the reporting period. Beneficiaries can complete and submit this form to the EENergy consortium at any point during the reporting period, but no earlier than the completion date of their activities, and no later than the 31st January 2026. Submitted forms will be continuously reviewed and processed throughout the project, however payments will only be processed within the scheduled payment period (further described in section 6.2).

Should the 5% energy saving not be achieved within the timeframe of the EENergy project, i.e., before 31st January 2026, funded beneficiaries will be required to sign a Declaration of Honour (DoH) estimating the timepoint by which the saving will be achieved along with the rationale for this forecast. Beneficiaries invoking the use of the DoH must provide a concrete, detailed, and credible explanation to justify the expected achievement of this 5% rationale in the future.

In the case of any major disruptions or problems occurring during the performance of the activities, to the extent that they impair the completion of the planned activities within the expected timeframe, funded beneficiaries must inform their EEN Sustainability Advisor and the EENergy consortium about the nature of the disruption and its impact on the implementation of the activities. The template Declaration of Honour will be made available ahead of the reporting period.

5.2.2 Auditing: Keeping Proper Records

All funded beneficiaries are required to keep proper records concerning the activities implemented and corresponding transactions, in particular any supporting documents related to the usage of the funds, the raw data collected, and any data used for calculating energy performance. Such documents may include bills, invoices, attendance lists, energy certificates, audit reports, datasheets, spreadsheets, or databases. These materials will be required from all beneficiaries for proving the use of funds and demonstrating the completion of the activities. These materials will also be required for any beneficiary subject to further checks and audits. Funded beneficiaries will be randomly selected for detailed checks following the completion of their activities. These checks will be carried out by the EENergy consortium.

5.2.3 Providing Material for Dissemination & Communication Purposes

All funded beneficiaries must commit to performing additional actions to support the dissemination & communication of the project. During the contract management phase (signing of the sub-grant agreement), funded beneficiaries will be additionally required to upload one piece of visual media (e.g., a photograph) relevant to the activity scope, with an additional piece of media provided during the reporting phase after the implementation of the action. These media, along with the data on energy reduction and use of funds, will serve communication purposes as a means to demonstrate the positive effects and progress gained for the beneficiary as a result of EENergy.

Funded beneficiaries must also commit to take reasonable efforts to promote the project and funding received. Funded beneficiaries are **encouraged** to take part in communication activities such as:

- Announcing their participation in EENergy on their website and social media accounts, mentioning the project (**EENergy – Enterprise Europe Network Energy grants for European SMEs**) and the funding program (SMP-COSME-2023-EENEE), also indicating the planned activities to be implemented.
- Documenting the progress of their implementation plan on their social media accounts and websites.
- Referencing the project and the program where possible, for example on the company’s website, company’s social media accounts or on the company premises.

All beneficiaries will have access to materials and templates to support these efforts.

In order to prepare the “success stories” on selected cases, all funded beneficiaries must agree to the use of the media, results, and other provided data to be used for publicity by the project partners, local/national media, and European Commission.

5.3 Conflict of Interest

All beneficiaries must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the activities is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest (‘conflict of interests’). At the same time, applicants cannot be affiliated with EENergy consortium partners, nor can they be employees of the consortium partners. All potential conflicts of interest will be assessed carefully. More information can be found in the EU’s guide to addressing conflicts of interest.⁵ All beneficiaries must formally notify the EENergy consortium without delay of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interest and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation. The EENergy consortium may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline. If a funded beneficiary breaches any of its obligations, the Sub-grant agreement may be automatically terminated. Moreover, if the Sub-grant Agreement is terminated due to a breach made by the beneficiary, the EENergy consortium reserves the right to suspend the final payment to the Subgrantee or claim a full refund of the final payment made to the beneficiary.

6 Administrative & Financial Details

6.1 Timings & Schedule

Figure 1 provides an indicative overview of the timeline of the EENergy open call 1. Following the call deadline, all applications will be subjected to an eligibility check. Applicants will be informed via email once this check is completed. All eligible applicants will be included in the randomised selection

⁵ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/protection-eu-budget/conflict-interest_en

process, with the outcome of this process also being communicated via email. Applicants selected for funding will then enter into the contracting phase culminating with the signing of the sub-grant agreement and the start of the implementation plan. The timeline below is at this stage indicative and subject to change depending on the number of applications received, or the need for any additional clarifications and checks with applicants.

6.2 Payment Information

Owing to the large number of funded beneficiaries (900 across the two calls), the processing of grant payments for the 2nd open call will take place in a pre-defined reporting period corresponding to the period of additional data gathering. For the reporting period, there will be a cut-off date for submitting energy data and proof of expenditure. Reporting information submitted beyond this cut-off date will not be processed and the beneficiary will not be able to claim their allocated funds. The timings of the reporting and payment periods are as follows:

Reporting Period Opens: 1st January 2026

Reporting Period Cut-Off: 31st January 2026*

Payment processed by 28th February 2026 **

Should a funded beneficiary not achieve the 5% energy reduction by the 31st January 2026, the beneficiary must complete and sign the declaration of honour as described in section 5.2.1, for which the following deadline applies:

Deadline to complete and provide the declaration of honour: 31st January 2026*

Payment processed by 28th February 2026 **

* The deadlines of the reporting periods may be extended if circumstances require.

** Please note that the capacity for processing applicant reports is limited within the EENergy consortium, and that the dates for payment processing may be subject to delay depending on the number of funded beneficiaries reporting received within a single reporting period.

All payments will be made via bank transfer to the bank account specified by the beneficiary during the contracting process.

6.3 Double Funding

Double funding is defined as **the use of two separate public funding sources for the same activity**. It is strictly prohibited. The funds provided by EENergy may be used as a contribution to an overall larger investment, provided that the remaining funds for the investment come from the company's own resources. To illustrate this, we take the following example:

A company wishes to invest in a new piece of equipment for their production line which should reduce the energy consumption of the line by an estimated 7%. The new piece of equipment will cost €30.000 (VAT exclusive) to purchase and install.

Three example scenarios are set forth:

Case 1: The company receives €10.000 from the EENergy Open Call 1 and uses this, along with €20.000 of its own capital, to purchase the new equipment -> **ELIGIBLE**

Case 2: The company receives €10.000 from the EENergy Open Call 1 and uses this, along with a €20.000 from a private bank, to purchase the new equipment -> **ELIGIBLE**

Case 3: The company receives €10.000 from the EENergy Open Call 1. Meanwhile, the company has also received €20.000 grant funding from a public regional/national/other EU program to support energy efficiency increases. The company uses both sets of funds to purchase the new equipment and both funds contribute to the activity defined within the EENergy scope. -> **DOUBLE FUNDING, NON-ELIGIBLE**

Case 4: The company receives €10.000 from the EENergy Open Call 1. Meanwhile, the company is carrying out an R&D or innovation project funded by a public grant programme which foresees the procurement of this new piece of equipment. The company uses the €10.000 from EENergy together with funding from the regional/ national/ EU project to purchase the same new equipment new equipment and both funds contribute to the activity defined within the EENergy scope. -> **DOUBLE FUNDING, NON-ELIGIBLE**

In cases 1 & 2, should a funded beneficiary not be able to provide the remaining funds originally planned, and hence not carry out the planned investment within the planned timeframe, the funds will be considered either unused or improperly used and hence subject to return to the EENergy consortium. In case of any doubts regarding possible double funding, applicants are encouraged to seek clarification with the EENergy help desk.

Nota Bene: Consecutive funding applications, e.g., tax return measures for R&D investments, are ineligible on direct grants received under EENergy.

6.4 Non-Eligible Costs

The funds provided by EENergy must be used exclusively for the activities set out in the application, to purchase/pay for equipment/services/courses provided by external third parties. For the avoidance of doubt, a non-exhaustive list of non-eligible costs is provided here:

- Any internal company costs including:
 - Salaries and wages
 - Internally invoiced goods & services
 - Beneficiary costs associated with the implementation of the activities or the gathering of data for reporting purposes
 - Overhead
 - Taxes on company operations (e.g., corporation tax)
- External Taxes (e.g., VAT)
- Equipment depreciation cannot be included as part of the activity budget
- Travel costs
- Attendance to conferences or trade shows
- Reverse leasing

6.5 Other Legal and Liability Information

For the selected funded beneficiaries, the Agreement will include the set of obligations towards the EENergy consortium, for example: promoting the project and giving visibility to the EU funding; understanding potential controls and audits organised by the EENergy Consortium. The EENergy consortium will carry out audits of funded beneficiaries, selected at random, to ensure proper usage of funds and reporting of data. In case data is found to have been misreported, or the provided funds have been used improperly, the expenditures will be deemed ineligible, and any provided funds must be returned. In order to carry out these audits, the funded beneficiary shall ensure that the EENergy consortium and any external body(ies) authorised by it have on-the-spot access at all reasonable times, notably to the funded beneficiary offices, to its computer data, energy data, to its accounting data and to all the information needed to carry out those audits. They shall ensure that the information is readily available on the spot at the moment of the audit and, if so requested, that data be handed over in an appropriate form. On the basis of the conclusions of the audit, the EENergy consortium can take all appropriate measures which it considers necessary, including the issuing of recovery orders regarding all or part of the payments made by EENergy to the company in question and the application of any applicable sanction to do so.

The EENergy consortium cannot be held liable for any acts or omission of the applicant in relation to the selected activity implemented by the funded beneficiary. The EENergy consortium shall not be liable for any defaults of any expenditures associated with the activity, including, for instance, anomalies in the functioning or performance thereof. Funded beneficiaries shall bear sole responsibility for ensuring that their acts within the framework of their activities do not infringe third parties' rights.

The EENergy Consortium might cancel the call at any time, change its provisions or extend it. In such a case we will inform all applicants about the change.

Any matters not covered by this Guide will be governed by Danish law and rules related to the Single Market Programme and EU grants.

7 Checklist

All applying SMEs are strongly encouraged to read the following points and ensure all points are properly addressed ahead of application submission.

- ✓ **Did you submit an eligible application to the 1st EENergy Open Call?** If you submitted an application to the 1st call and passed the eligibility check, you are unfortunately not eligible for the 2nd call and your application will not be considered for selection. In this case, please do not submit an application for the 2nd call.
- ✓ **Have you formulated an implementation plan with the help of an EEN sustainability advisor?** The existence of an EEN-formulated implementation plan is a pre-requisite for the submission of an application. Applicants without an implementation plan will not be considered for selection.

- ✓ **Do your planned activities fall entirely within the eligible cost categories?** All EENergy actions must fall within the categories described in section 2.2.
- ✓ **Do you have a clear reasoning to achieve the 5% or greater energy reduction target?** Applications must present a clear rationale for how the planned activities can achieve the energy reduction of 5% or more, either based on direct quantitative data (in the case of an investment action), or through appropriate targeting of measures (in the case of stand-alone consultancy and/or training actions).
- ✓ **Have you followed the logic chart to ensure that your implementation plan is eligible?** The flow chart presented in Figure 2 provides a logical decision tree to ensure that all required aspects of your plan are present so that it can be considered eligible. Please follow the chart to ensure everything has been addressed.
- ✓ **Is your application complete?** Have you completed every section of the proposal and provided all the information requested? Applications which are missing any of this information (incl. the request for information to be uploaded) will be deemed ineligible.
- ✓ **Have you submitted your application through the official grant management platform?** Only applications received through the official platform will be considered for selection. Applications received by other means will be deemed ineligible.
- ✓ **Have you submitted your application before the deadline?** The grant management platform will close at the time and date of the call deadline. Any applications received after the deadline will be deemed ineligible.
- ✓ **Have you informed your sustainability advisor that your application is submitted?** Your sustainability advisor must approve your application for it to be considered in the evaluation procedure, please make sure that they are aware of this obligation, that they are aware that your application is submitted, and that they approve the application before the deadline.
- ✓ **Are you aware of reporting and dissemination obligations?** These must be followed in addition to the technical implementation of the action.