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GÉANT Innovation Programme Guide for Applicants

Authors: GÉANT Innovation Programme Team

Contact details Further information is available on www.geant.org/innovation

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Summary

The GÉANT Innovation Programme invites proposals from eligible organisations and research teams for research projects. The programme offers researchers flexibility to focus on any subject area or topic providing that it falls within the GÉANT community remit. Proposals can, for example, draw from networking, cloud, security, trust & identity and education, but the primary focus and impact must benefit the GÉANT European Research and Education community.

We encourage ambitious and novel research proposals addressing new concepts and techniques, particularly those with the potential for significant scientific or societal and economic impact. Our decision on the research projects that will work with GÉANT will be based on a number of criteria, including: quality, innovation, potential impact and value for money. The call for proposals is for research project funding of up to EUR30k, for a duration of no longer than 9 months. Most projects will have a duration of 3-6 months, and all work must be completed no later than the end of December 2021.

Proposals may be submitted in response to the call at any time, however, we will evaluate proposals on a monthly basis. Research funding from the Innovation Programme will be awarded on a “first come, first served” basis. Once the total budget for research projects has been allocated, the programme will be closed. Therefore, we invite prospective participants to submit their proposals as soon as possible.

Introduction

The needs of research and education users are continuously evolving, and for NRENs and the GÉANT community, it is important to identify innovative ideas to support technological evolution, new use cases, and help to accelerate and to expand these ideas into new services or tools.

GÉANT Association has reserved EUR300k to support an Innovation Programme for specific research projects to be carried out by members of the GÉANT community i.e. GÉANT member NRENs, universities, research institutions/institutes or other such legal entities to which a GÉANT Association member NREN (<https://www.geant.org/About/Membership/Pages/MAandGareps.aspx>) provides services. Research projects benefiting from this funding are selected by means of a competitive call, with awards by the Innovation Programme.

This document contains the basic information needed to prepare a proposal to the Innovation Programme. It also describes how the proposal should be submitted, and the criteria on which it will be evaluated.

A successful applicant will sign a research agreement with the GÉANT Association, which will outline the work to be done, the expected outcomes and results, as well as the conditions (including IPR) under which their projects will be carried out.

Scope and Contents of Proposals

The scope of the GÉANT Innovation Programme is to support innovative ideas that benefit the GÉANT community. This enables innovators to develop their ideas and perform proof of concept research in a real environment. Examples of previous innovation developed within the GÉANT community include widely adopted services, such as eduroam, eduVPN and eduMEET.

It is expected that programme participants will propose concrete and specific research plans that enable them to achieve specific results during the given timeframe. Selected projects may be invited to refine and implement the plan during the proposal evaluation process. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) will be managed according to the corresponding research funding agreement which the lead legal entity shall adhere to.

For further details on how to submit proposals, visit the GÉANT website www.geant.org/innovation. In particular, potential applicants should consult the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). Note that the FAQ page will be regularly updated with responses to questions received.

Eligibility

Member NRENs from the GÉANT Association or legal entities from one of its connected institutions, i.e. any organisation recognised as a member of the GÉANT community (excluding GÉANT Association industry associates) are eligible to submit proposals. This means that applications from universities, research or education institutes or institutions, where they are connected to a GÉANT Association NREN, are welcomed and eligible for research project funding under this programme. If you have any questions regarding eligibility please email innovation@geant.org.

Funding of Participation

An indicative maximum budget of up to a maximum of EUR30K will be assigned to successful research projects for the purpose of carrying out the work. We expect projects to have a 3-6 month duration, up to a maximum of 9 months. Work will need to be completed and invoices submitted by the end of December 2021. The provision of additional resources, either from internal or external funds is not required, however, those projects that already have resources in place may be given priority.

Research proposals may be submitted by a single organisation (must be a legal entity) or by a small consortium. Large consortia are not expected to submit proposals. However, only the lead partner organisation will receive funding and will be responsible for assigning a budget to any other partners within their project. GÉANT will not ask for a detailed declaration of expenditure, however, participants should be able to provide this information in the event of an audit, and will therefore need to maintain the project's supporting documentation.

How to Prepare and Submit a Proposal

Proposals can be submitted via GÉANT's Indico system as described in this document. Documents will be submitted by Indico at <https://events.geant.org/e/innovation>.

Applicants should use the application form (Appendix A) when presenting the content of their proposals. The template headings are designed to highlight those aspects that will be assessed against the evaluation criteria, as set out in Appendix B. It covers, among other things, the concept and objectives of the proposed work, the participants and their roles, the implementation details and the impact that is expected to arise from the proposed work.

Applicants must:

- Download and complete the application form.
- When completed, the applicants must ensure that proposals are saved as a Microsoft Word document or PDF, and then uploaded here <https://events.geant.org/e/innovation>.

Proposal Language

The proposal must be prepared in English. Proposals submitted in any other language will not be evaluated.

Submission of Proposals

Proposals created according to the above instructions must be submitted electronically via Indico (<https://events.geant.org/e/innovation>). Proposals sent to the Innovation Programme by any other means are regarded as "not submitted", and will not be evaluated.

Only accepted research proposal outlines will be made public.

Proposal Evaluation and Selection

The evaluation of proposals will take place on a monthly basis. Eligible proposals will be evaluated, using the form shown in Appendix B.

A minimum of three subject matter experts will be assigned to make an initial evaluation of each proposal received. At least one expert will be from the GÉANT project GN4-3, in order to ensure the alignment of topics and avoid duplication of work and ideas (since the proposal may be a better 'fit' to existing activities, such as those included in the GÉANT GN4-3 Incubators). If this is the case, it will be discussed directly with the proposer once the initial evaluation stage is completed.

A final evaluation will then be completed by a committee, which may include:

- Members of the GÉANT Community Committee (GCC).
- Steering committee members from GÉANT Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and Task Forces (TFs).
- Well recognised subject matter experts from the GÉANT community.
- Ex officio members from the GÉANT Association.

All evaluators will sign a conflict of interest form before taking part in the evaluation process and must be independent of any member of the consortium and of any applicant. In case one or more of the ex officio members are not independent, they shall abstain into the evaluation process in order to perform strictly administrative functions.

During the evaluation process, the lead partner in a proposal may be invited for a negotiation meeting with members of the evaluation committee - for example, in cases where further clarifications are required regarding the content, costs or outcomes of the project.

Once a research proposal has been selected, the lead partner, which must be a legal entity (representing the consortium if several legal entities are involved) taking part in the project, will enter into a research agreement with the GÉANT Association. This research agreement will list the research to be undertaken, expected outcomes, key results and IPR matters. Research activities may only start upon signature of the agreement.

Timetable

The Innovation Programme call for proposals will be open for the duration of the programme – until the total budget has been allocated. Monthly reminders of the call will be issued, and evaluations will be called not later than four weeks after a proposal is received.

Activity/Milestone	Timing
Call for new proposals	From 23 February 2021, with monthly deadlines. The programme is open until further notice. Once the total budget has been allocated the programme will close.
Evaluation of proposals	Proposals will be evaluated on a monthly basis
Final evaluation report sent to applicant	Within 5 weeks of proposal submission Within 6 weeks of proposal submission (if further clarifications or negotiations are required)
For accepted projects - GÉANT Association research agreement sent out	Within 1 week of notification of success

Indicative timetable for the first Innovation Programme

Final Report

All successfully funded research projects will submit a final report to the evaluation committee. The report shall include the results achieved, or the reason why they were not achieved and “lessons learned” during the activity. Upon acceptance of the evaluation committee of the final report, an interaction with the project coordinator will explore, if necessary, how to carry on further the obtained results.

Checklist

This section provides a list of points against which applicants are advised to check their proposals prior to submission.

- **Is your organisation eligible?**

If in doubt please check either with your local NREN or the Innovation Programme Co-ordinator (innovation@geant.org).

- **Is the proposal eligible?**

Applicants must submit a complete proposal, using the Indico submission system. Any proposal not meeting the eligibility requirements will be considered ineligible and will not be evaluated.

- **Is the proposal complete?**

Proposals must comprise administrative information on the standard forms, as well as a description of the applicant’s proposal, as described in this guide. A proposal that does not contain both parts will be considered ineligible and will not be evaluated.

- **Do you need further advice and support?**

For further information and help, please email innovation@geant.org. Answers to your question may be included in an FAQ section available on the Innovation Programme page on the GÉANT website.

Support to Applicants

For further information and help, please consult the Innovation Programme web pages in the first instance www.geant.org/innovation

If the information you require is not on the website, please contact: innovation@geant.org.

FAQs

The latest updates on FAQ can be found online:

<https://www.geant.org/Innovation/Pages/Guidance-for-applicants.aspx>

What is the maximum award one organisation can be granted?

A single, eligible legal entity will be awarded up to EUR30,000 per project. One organisation can submit multiple applications, as each project will be judged separately on its merits.

What costs are eligible?

Costs that are directly associated with undertaking the research project are eligible, for example, manpower, travel, etc.

Should project participants be located in an EU country? Does geographical location also apply to team members (EU nationals) and subcontractors?

Project participants should be registered in a country where a GÉANT Association NREN is located. There are no restrictions on the nationality of team members, but they should be employed by a participant organisation. Similarly, there is no restriction on the nationality or location of subcontractors. Subcontracting needs to be explained in the application (purpose of subcontractor, input to the project, etc.).

Does the project need to have its own resources in place?

Projects that already have their own resources in place may be scored more highly than those without. These resources may come either from internal funds of the organisation or external funding. In the latter case it is important to indicate the source, e.g. national or regional public funding, external investor, bank loan, etc.

Are large/small companies eligible beneficiaries?

The single legal entity applying should be part of the research and education community and have services provided to them by their local NREN. Therefore, it is unlikely that large or small businesses will be eligible to apply (except in circumstances where there is a clear link to the local NREN).

For a multi-partner project, is all payment/justification handled via the lead partner?

Payments will be made to the lead partner only – the lead partner must be a legal entity.

How will the funding be paid? Do milestones/deliverables justify the payment or is a detailed declaration of expenditures needed?

GÉANT Association will provide a final payment at the end of the project, based on the acceptance of the final report. Interim payments will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

A detailed declaration of expenditure is not required, however, in the event of an audit, the lead partner should be able to prove research project spend, so it is necessary to maintain a full set of supporting documents.

Does GÉANT pay any overhead (e.g. 25% as in H2020 calls/programmes) for costs that cannot be identified and calculated by the project participants as directly attributed to the project?

The Innovation programme is to support research projects and is not grant funding. Therefore, there are no set rules for how organisations design their budget. The aim of the budget in the proposal is to demonstrate to the evaluators that the requested research funding is consistent with the effort invested in producing the outcome the project aims to achieve. It should give GÉANT a ‘value for money’ perspective on the project.

Does the local NREN need to know about my proposal?

We will ensure that the local NREN is aware of your submission in order to ensure no duplication of existing research work going on ‘in-country’. Your proposal may be shared with an NREN for the purposes of eligibility checking.

Is it possible to attach support letters e.g. from the local NREN?

Letters of support may be included as part of the proposal in so far as they are relevant. You may also wish to contact your local NREN to inform and discuss your application with them. A list of NRENs is available here <https://www.geant.org/About/Membership/Pages/MAandGareps.aspx>

Can universities have a system supplier as one of their partners?

The “lead partner” will choose the best partners to deliver the objectives of the project. The GÉANT association will sign an agreement with the lead partner only.

Can a not-for-profit association be a partner?

Yes, as long as it is a legal entity and it is a “connected institution” of a GÉANT association NREN. Only “connected institutions” can be a leading partner.

Can one institution have more applications?

Yes

What would be the criteria, that the proposal will be evaluated by?

A list of the criteria are made available in the [Guide for Applicants](#).

What about adaptations of previous EC work – are they eligible?

Adaptation of previous EC work is eligible - as long as the benefit is for the R&E community and it is genuinely innovation and useful.

Regarding the Eligibility criteria what do you mean by ‘connected institutions’ to the National Members?

We mean organisations which are users of GEANT Association member NRENS.

It was mentioned that projects can last up to 9 months, but work needs to be completed before Dec 2021 - that seems to be a contradiction, especially if the first projects start only later this year - can anyone clarify please?

Funding will be assigned on a first come first served basis – so projects funded earlier will have the possibility of lasting 9 months. However, we expect the majority of projects to last between 3-6 months only. 9 months is the absolute maximum and project must be completed no later than the end of December 2021.

Would it be possible to form a consortium (e.g. 2 partners both members of GEANT Association)?

Yes of course – but only the “lead partner” will sign an agreement with GÉANT and invoices will only be paid to the lead partner. The lead partner is wholly responsible for any additional assignment of funding between other partners in a small consortium.

GÉANT ran an Open Call programme before – is this the same? Are these “Open Calls”?

No. The Innovation Programme is not a grant funding programme and no EC guidelines or regulations (usually associated with a formal funding mechanism like for example an “Open Call”) apply here. The GÉANT Innovation Programme is a lightweight and agile scheme to support new ideas and innovative concepts from the GÉANT Community.

Is there a list of previous successful projects on the web?

This is a new programme so we don’t have a list – but a list of projects funding via our previous [Open Calls programme is available here](#).

Is there a list of connected institutions of NRENS so that I can find partners?

Some NRENS provide such a list on their web sites, others don’t. If in doubt you can contact your [local NREN](#).

Can we present the idea that we want to test to someone prior to writing the application and get the feedback if it is worth trying?

There will be regular “drop in” sessions, held the first Monday of the month, starting 5 April 2021. Check the [GÉANT event calendar](#) to stay up to date.

For the project, do we have to demonstrate the costs (financial report) or is the payment modality a lump sum?

The payment modality will be a lump sum paid to the lead partner after the end of the project and submission of the final report.

What is the expected TRL (Technology Readiness Level) for the proposals?

We do not work with TRL levels. We focus on the levels of innovation and benefits to the Research and Education community. No need to reach any TRL to be eligible

Are SMEs eligible applicants for the Innovation Programme?

No. However SMEs can be partners of an eligible applicant.

Are legal entities not belonging to the GEANT community eligible applicants for the Innovation Programme, for example non-European institutions?

No. However they can be partners of an eligible applicant.

Appendix A Proposal Template

Research proposals sent to the Innovation Programme must be submitted according to the procedure described in this guide.

Instructions are given in italicised text on the application form, which should be deleted from the final version of the proposal document. Apart from the front page of the proposal, applicants must fill in the set of forms provided.

The application form can be obtained from the GÉANT website:
<https://www.geant.org/Innovation/Pages/Innovation-Programme.aspx>

Please note that in the case of proposals submitted by a consortium:

- The lead partner/coordinator (must be a legal entity) completes and submits the proposal.
- If the research proposal is selected and approved by the Innovation Programme, the coordinator will sign a research agreement with the GÉANT Association. The coordinator has sole responsibility for all activities performed also by any other partner within its consortium (if any).

Appendix B Evaluation Criteria and Form

1. Innovation and Excellence

- Clarity, pertinence, soundness of the concept and credibility of the proposed methodology
- Extent that the proposed work is beyond the state of the art, and demonstrates innovation potential (e.g. ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts and approaches, new products, services or business and organisational models)

2. Quality and efficiency of the implementation and the management

- Excellence/Capacity of the applicant
- Overall project implementation i.e. quality and effectiveness of the workplan including extent to which the resources assigned to the work are in line with its objective and deliverables

3. Expected impact and value for money

- Impact of the innovation on the European R&E community
- Quality of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results (including management of IPR), and to manage research data, services or outcomes where relevant.

Sample Evaluation Form

Proposal No.:		Acronym:
1. Innovation and excellence of the proposal		Score: <i>(Threshold 3/5; Weight 1)</i>
2. Quality and efficiency of the implementation and the management		Score: <i>(Threshold 3/5; Weight 1)</i> <i>For the purposes of any subsequent negotiation, an above-threshold score for this criterion is regarded as an indication that the proposer(s) has the operational capacity to carry out the work</i>

3. Potential impact	Score: <i>(Threshold 3/5; Weight 1)</i>
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Remarks	Overall score: <i>(Threshold 10/15)</i>
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Does this proposal contain ethical issues that may need further attention?	NO	YES
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I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, I have no direct or indirect conflict of interest in the evaluation of this proposal.

Name	
Signature	
Date	

Name	
Signature	
Date	

^[1]

0 The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.

1 Poor The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2 Fair While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses.

3 Good The proposal addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary.

4 Very good The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible.

5 Excellent The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

Glossary

CLB	(organisation) Controlled By
CLS	(organisation) Controls
GCC	GÉANT Community Committee
GÉANT community	GÉANT Association, the NREN members, NORDUnet (representing five Nordic countries), the GÉANT associates plus the many users of GÉANT and NREN infrastructures and services.
GN4-3	GN4-3 (GÉANT Network 4 Phase 3), a project part-funded by the EC's Horizon 2020 programme under the Specific Grant Agreement No. 856726 https://www.geant.org/Projects/GEANT_Project_GN4-3
H2020	Horizon 2020, EU programme for Research and Innovation
NREN	National Research and Education Network
R&E	Research and Education
RFP	Request for Proposal
SG	(organisation part of the) Same Group
SME	Small and Medium size Enterprise