Design+
Futures+
Art+
driven method

MUSAE

MUSAE FACTORY MODEL
OPEN CALL GUIDELINES

This guideline is designed for **European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH)** that wish to implement an Open Call model inspired by the experience of the MUSAE project, using the **Design Futures Art-driven (DFA)** method. The DFA method integrates artistic and technological approaches to develop innovative and sustainable solutions, creating a bridge between technology companies, researchers, and creatives.

An Open Call is a powerful tool to **identify and support innovative projects**, promoting collaboration among stakeholders from different sectors. This guide provides practical instructions on how to structure and manage an effective Open Call, ensuring transparency, accessibility, and tangible impact.

Objectives and themes

An Open Call based on the DFA method aims to **stimulate innovation through the integration of art and technology**. The (E)DIH should first define the **objective** of the Open Call, the **theme**, and the **expected outcomes**. This includes specifying whether the Open Call seeks visionary future scenarios, as in MUSAE's first Open Call, or concrete design briefs leading to prototype development, as in the MUSAE's second Open Call.

Selected projects can explore the application of various technologies based on the (E)DIH's priorities. While MUSAE focused on AI, Robotics, and Wearables, (E)DIHs can adapt the Open Call to any relevant technological domain, such as biotechnology, IoT, or sustainable materials.

Value for Participants:

- Access to funding for research and prototype development.
- Mentorship from academic and industry experts.
- Networking with European stakeholders.
- Opportunity to validate ideas in advanced experimentation environments.

MUSAE Example: In the MUSAE project, selected teams worked on future scenarios for the food industry, applying AI and wearable technologies to improve the sustainability of the food value chain. One of the winning projects developed an AI-driven device to monitor the environmental impact of users' dietary habits.

Target audience and beneficiaries

To maximize impact, a DFA-based Open Call should involve:

- **Artists** with experience in digital art, speculative design, and media art.
- **SMEs and tech startups** operating in different technological domains such as AI, Robotics, and Wearables among others.
- **Research centers and universities** are interested in interdisciplinary projects.

Creating documentation

To ensure clear and effective participation, each Open Call should include:

Guide for Applicants: This document should provide comprehensive information to ensure applicants clearly understand the Open Call process. It should include:

- **Objectives and Scope:** A clear definition of the Open Call's purpose and expected outcomes.
- **Eligibility Criteria:** Who can apply, including any geographical, organizational, or thematic restrictions.
- **Evaluation Process:** Detailed description of the assessment criteria, scoring methodology, and selection stages.
- **Application Procedure:** Step-by-step instructions on how to submit an application, required documents, and technical details (e.g., accepted file formats, submission platform).
- **Funding and Support:** Information on available financial resources, mentorship, and other benefits for selected projects.
- **Timeline and Deadlines:** Key dates for submission, evaluation, and implementation phases.
- **Terms and Conditions:** Compliance requirements, intellectual property rights, and contractual obligations for selected participants.

Application Template: standardized form including project description, budget, and expected impact.

FAQ: addressing common concerns and simplifying the application process.

Application process

Use a **user-friendly digital platform** to manage applications. Platforms such as *FundingBox* (a paid service) and *F6S* (a free option) can be considered based on the DIH's budget and technical needs.

Define a clear **timeline** with the following phases:

- Launch and promotion
- Application deadline

- Evaluation and selection
- Announcement of results
- Implementation and post-selection support

MUSAE Example: In the first MUSAE Open Call, the F6S platform was used to manage applications. However, due to difficulties encountered in automated evaluation, FundingBox was chosen for the second Open Call, ensuring a smoother and more efficient process.

DISSEMINATION AND PROMOTION

Communication strategy

To maximize visibility and outreach, establishing a strong **connection with the STARTS ecosystem** is essential. All promotional materials, including banners and graphics for the Open Call, should align with the **STARTS visual identity and layout** to ensure consistency. Promotion should be carried out through the official **STARTS website and communication channels**, with additional dissemination via social media platforms (LinkedIn, X, Facebook, Instagram) and **(E)DIH websites**.

For further guidance, the official STARTS communication pack can be accessed [here](). Additionally, (E)DIHs can collaborate with companies specializing in promoting Open Calls for SMEs, such as [SPLORO](), to extend their reach. Partnerships with universities, research centers, and cultural institutions can further enhance engagement.

To support applicants, **webinars and Q&A sessions** will be organized to explain the process and encourage participation.

MUSAE Example: During the second Open Call, three informational webinars were organized to address candidate questions and improve the quality of submitted proposals. Participation in the webinars was crucial in increasing the number of eligible applications.

EVALUATION PROCESS

Selection of the evaluation committee

A skilled and knowledgeable evaluation committee is crucial to ensuring a fair and well-informed selection process. To achieve this, **experts in art, technology, and**

business can be identified through an open call, guaranteeing diversity and expertise. The committee should consist of a **minimum of three to five independent experts** to ensure a balanced evaluation process. To uphold integrity, a conflict of interest policy must be implemented, and **all members should sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA)**. Additionally, committee members will undergo **training through dedicated webinars** covering key aspects such as evaluation criteria, scoring methodology, conflict of interest management, and best practices for selecting proposals.

Evaluation stages

The evaluation process should be fair, transparent, and conducted thoroughly to minimize the risk of errors. The following evaluation stages can be followed, particularly when the number of applicants exceeds 10, while a more simplified procedure may be applied if there are fewer candidates.

Stage 1: Eligibility check. This initial phase verifies that applications meet the basic requirements, including completeness of documentation and compliance with eligibility criteria. Any non-compliant applications are disqualified at this stage.

Stage 2: Remote evaluation. Selected experts assess applications individually based on predefined criteria such as innovation, feasibility, and impact. Each application receives scores, and evaluators provide qualitative feedback.

Stage 3: Consensus Meeting. Evaluators convene to discuss discrepancies in individual assessments. The goal is to ensure a fair and balanced evaluation by aligning scores and rankings based on collective expert insights.

Stage 4: Jury Day. The top-ranked applicants are invited to present their projects live before a panel of experts. This stage allows for in-depth questioning and real-time assessment of the proposals, ultimately leading to final selection decisions.

Stage 5: Announcement of winners and feedback to non-selected applicants. After Jury Day, final results are

communicated. Selected applicants are notified of the next steps, while non-selected applicants receive constructive feedback to help them improve for future opportunities.

MUSAE Example: In the first Open Call, evaluation was conducted by a committee composed of both internal and external experts, ensuring a balance between artistic and technological perspectives. The process was divided into two phases: remote evaluation and a Jury Day where finalists presented their projects live.

FOLLOW-UP AND IMPLEMENTATION

Communication of results

All applicants should be notified of the outcome, receiving detailed feedback on their submissions. The winners will be publicly announced through official channels to ensure transparency and visibility. Additionally, individual meetings will be held with the selected applicants to define a clear implementation plan and outline the next steps.

Support for winners

The selected winners will receive personalized mentorship and training programs tailored to their needs. They will also gain access to technological resources and infrastructure to support the development of their projects. Regular check-ins and progress reports will be conducted to monitor advancements and provide guidance. Furthermore, networking events will be organized to foster collaboration and facilitate the dissemination of results.

LESSON LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IEDIH

- **Optimal Open Call duration**: at least two months to allow broad participation.

- **Appropriate platform:** choose tools that simplify application management and automated evaluation.

- **Clear and targeted documentation:** avoid excessive bureaucracy.

- **Greater support for applicants:** interactive webinars and a dedicated email address.

- **Automation of the evaluation process** to reduce time and ensure greater efficiency.

By following this guide, (E)DIHs will be able to successfully replicate a DFA-based Open Call, ensuring transparency, inclusivity, and a tangible impact on technological and artistic innovation.

TEMPLATES AND TOOLS

» Guide for Applicants template

» Application Template

(Click to download the templates)

EXPLORE THE FULL MUSAE FACTORY MODEL PACK

> **DESIGN FUTURE ART-DRIVEN METHOD (DFA)**
> **RESIDENCY FORMAT**
> **OPEN CALL FORMAT**
> **MENTORING GUIDELINES**
> **TRAINING GUIDELINES**
> **DFA PROJECTS AND USE CASES**
> **INTEGRATED STAKEHOLDER NETWORK**

DOWNLOAD ALL MATERIALS FROM THE MUSAE WEBSITE
https://musae.starts.eu/factory-model-pack/

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