

Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) for S3P-Industry investment projects

Guidance for Applicants

1. Background

The Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) scheme provides free-of-charge expert advice to eligible investment projects generated through the Smart Specialisation Platform for Industrial Modernisation (S3P-Industry).

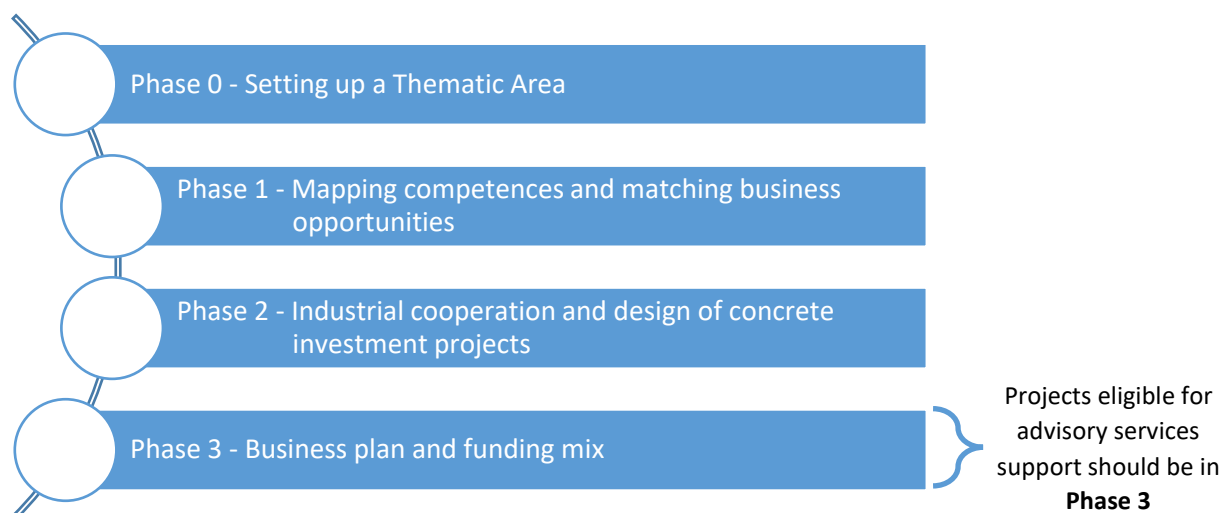
The scheme, launched in 2019, is funded by the EU Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (COSME). The Programme is managed by the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME) of the European Commission.

2. Objective

The objective of the TAF is to help strengthen the viability of investment projects and underlying business plans before submitting proposals or applications to financial institutions for project funding.

3. Which investment projects can benefit from this service?

The focus of the TAF is concrete investment projects, which are in **Phase 3 of the S3P-Industry**¹.



¹ In Phase 3, industrial stakeholders supported by their regional authorities and EU support actions should develop a business plan and explore funding opportunities for financing their projects, looking at synergies among various funding sources.

4. What kind of advisory services are available?

The advisory services involve the provision of a wide range of business and legal expertise tailored to the needs of specific investment projects. For example, the support offered may be broad in scope if multiple business plan areas require further development; or it may be more focussed and specific to individual legal or business issues. Individual projects will receive expert support in the form of 5 – 60 expert days. The below table provides an overview of potential areas, though this is not an exhaustive list.

Advisory Services	
Category	Sample topics (not an exhaustive list)
Business advisory services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Investment plans and funding options ❖ Products, services, markets and Unique Value Propositions ❖ Business models ❖ Human resources ❖ Sales and marketing ❖ Revenue streams ❖ Cost components ❖ Cash flow analysis
Legal advisory services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Sectoral regulations and compliance ❖ Investment vehicles, contractual and legal structures ❖ Governance rules and structures ❖ Project governance and management ❖ Intellectual property rights (IPR) issues
Assistance in planning and application for financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Road-mapping ❖ Due diligence preparation ❖ Assistance in negotiations with financial institutions

5. Who can apply?

Projects linked to S3P-Industry partnerships can apply to receive advisory services. In order to be considered, the projects must satisfy the following criteria:

1. The project must be generated within the **Smart Specialisation Platform for Industrial Modernisation (S3P-Industry)**
2. The project **must be represented by a specific person (the ‘project manager’) representing** a lead organisation based in one of the regions active on the S3P-Industry platform;
3. The project must have an **interregional dimension**. This means that it should include participating organisations from two or more regions of the S3P-Industry platform. In cases where participating organisations are from one region only, the applicant should demonstrate clearly inter-regional associations/linkages within the project;
4. The project must **commit the necessary human resources** to work with assigned experts, and implement the steps agreed with the experts.

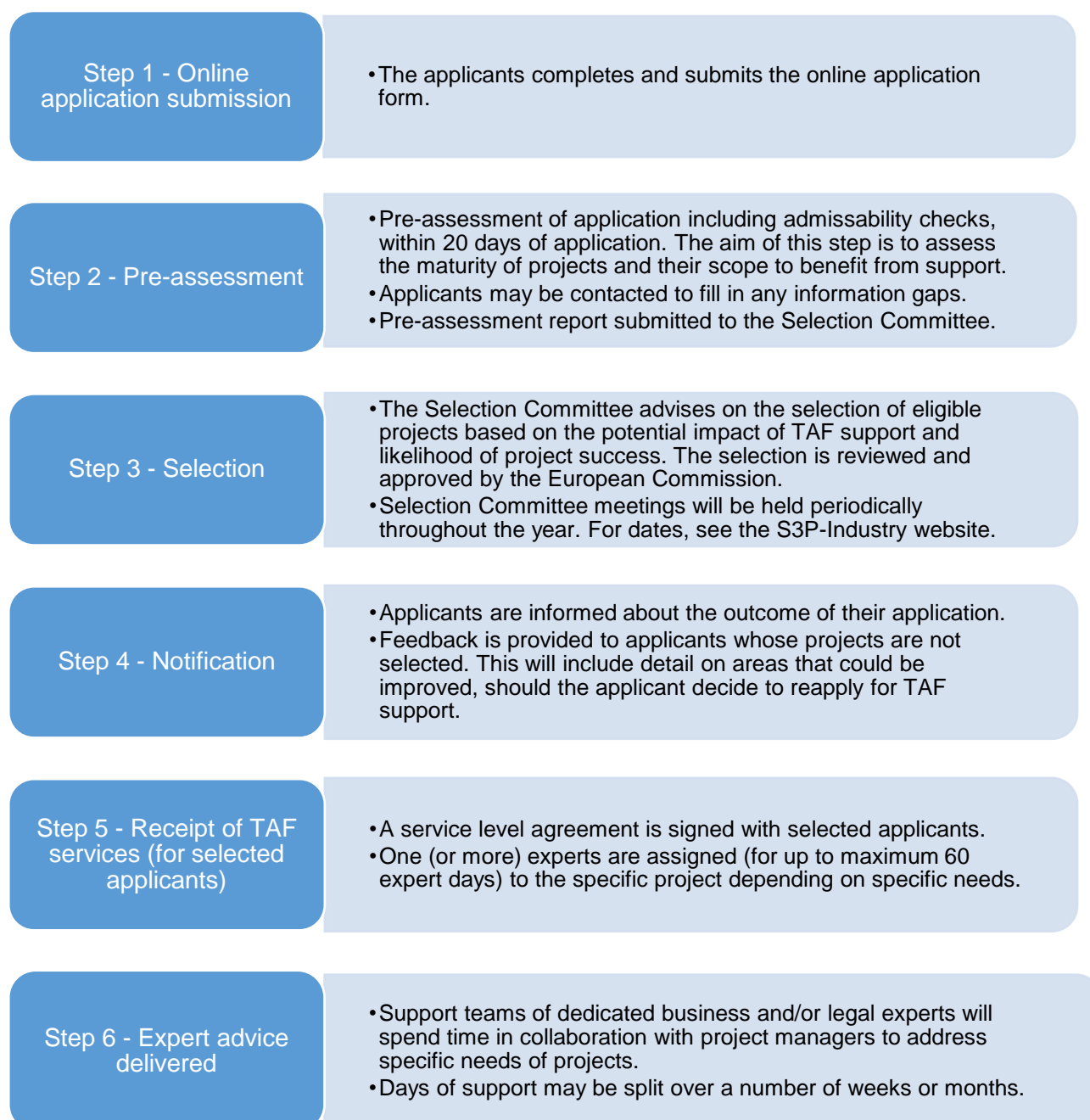
6. How to apply?

To apply, please fill out the online application form available on <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/taf>. The application form must be completed in English.

Annexed to this manual, the full list of questions to be addressed in the application form can be found, including guidance notes for each question.

7. How does the process work?

The process is shown in the diagram below.





The support scheme is designed to **encourage successful applications**, not to exclude them. If an application is not selected, the project can re-apply with an improved application as long as there is time remaining and resources remain available.

8. What makes a good application?

The application process is designed to help assessors understand if a project can make progress towards investment readiness through available advisory support. Assessors will look for evidence that the project is well developed in terms of management and organisation, and has the potential to benefit from TAF support and high potential of being successfully implemented (funded)..

To improve your chances of selection, your project and application should fulfil the following criteria:

- The project must be commercially focussed, i.e. it must have the **potential to generate revenue**. It must be clear to any future potential investor that they could receive a return on their investment (i.e. repayment).
- The project is relevant to the ambitions of the S3P-Industry (see part 1 and 3 of the application form). This means that:
 - It must have a clear focus on thematic areas of S3P-Industry and strengthen cross-regional cooperation;
 - The applicant is committed to **monitoring, evaluation and sharing feedback** with the advisory services support team.
- The project is sufficiently mature to receive dedicated support, meaning that it is beyond a raw idea. You have conducted your own business analysis and tried to formalise a business plan (see parts 2 and 3 of the application form).
- You have identified obstacles to bankability and seek advice from experts to overcome them.
- The application is complete and provides a clear picture of the project (see part 3 of the application form).
- The project is likely to be successful (see part 3 of the application form). This entails that it:
 - has a clear set of **objectives**;
 - is well organised and planned, with clear **governance, project management and a workplan**;
 - must have a unique value proposition or – in other words – **an investible idea at its centre**. This idea does not have to be fully formed, but the applicant should have an idea about how an investment could be repaid over the project lifecycle;
 - it generates **revenue**.
- The applicant has a good understanding of its needs for support (see part 4 of the application form).

9. Key dates

Applications will be received on a rolling basis and assessed in assessment rounds, which will be held three to five times a year. To see the dates of application rounds, please see the TAF page on the S3P website here: <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/taf>



10. Contact us

You can contact us by emailing us at TAF@ecorys.com. Before contacting us, we encourage you to carefully read this guidance, and the guidance notes in the application form itself. We are able to assist applicants through support and advice on technical aspects related to the TAF application form and process. We regret however that we are unable to advise on the suitability or strength of project ideas, which can be covered through other available EC support services.



ANNEX – Question by question guidance for the application form

This annex lists all questions asked in the application form and provides you with further information to help make your application a success. For any queries, please contact TAF@ecorys.com.

Question	Guidance
<p>Part 1 – Admissibility criteria Part 1 of the application form is designed to ensure that your project satisfies the essential admissibility criteria for advisory services support. Please answer all of the following questions.</p>	
<p>1.1 Have you read the Guidance for Applicants available at the S3P website?</p>	<p>Please read the Guidance for Applicants in full before filling in the TAF application.</p> <p>To proceed with filling in the application, you must first read the guidance.</p>
<p>1.2 Which thematic area under the S3P-Industry is your project linked to?</p>	<p>Select the Thematic Area your project is linked to.</p> <p>If you do not have a link to one of the thematic areas, you will not be admissible for TAF.</p>
<p>1.3 Which S3P-Industry region is your project lead organisation based in?</p>	<p>Select the region of your lead organisation. This region must be active on the S3P-Industry and will otherwise not be listed.</p> <p>To proceed you must select a region.</p>
<p>1.4 Does the project have an inter-regional dimension? (For example, by having participating organisations from two or more regions or having other clear inter-regional associations/links.)</p>	<p>Confirm that the project has an inter-regional dimension.</p> <p>To continue with the application, the project must have an inter-regional dimension i.e. through having project organisations from two or more regions or demonstrating other clear inter-regional associations/links.</p>
<p>1.5 Which other regions are involved in your project? (For example, by having project organisations based there or by being impacted by your project)</p>	<p>Select other regions where your project partners are based. The listed regions you can choose from (multiple answers are possible) are those currently involved in S3P-Industry partnerships. If partners are based in other regions, please select the box “other” and enter the name(s) of the region(s).</p> <p>To continue with the application, the project must have an inter-regional dimension i.e. through having project organisations from two or more regions or demonstrating other clear inter-regional associations/links.</p>
<p>1.6 Who is the project manager of your project? The project manager is an individual who is the main contact point for the application and must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member of the project lead organisation; 	<p>Confirm that you have a project manager appointed. To proceed with the application, this question must be responded to positively.</p> <p>The project manager will be the responsible person representing the participating</p>



Question	Guidance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to represent the participating organisations/consortium for this application; • Available for contact throughout the application process and for interview; • Available and entitled to work in collaboration with the supporting experts in case of successful application. 	<p>organisations/consortium for the application and advisory services support. The project manager must be a member of the project lead organisation. The project manager must be available and entitled to work in collaboration with the supporting experts in case of successful application.</p> <p>You will then be asked to provide further identifying information about your project manager. Name, organisation, job title and e-mail address are compulsory. Additional contact information is optional, but facilitates the next steps of the application process.</p>
<p>Part 2 – About the project consortium The purpose of this section is to find out more about the members of your consortium.</p>	
<p>Project name</p>	<p>Please state the name of your investment project</p>
<p>2.1 Under which form of legal agreement does the project consortium operate?</p>	<p>Please describe the legal form of cooperation under which your project consortium operates. For example, this may be under a Memorandum of Understanding between consortium members. For more advanced projects, a separate legal entity (e.g. Joint Venture may exist).</p> <p>Upload option provide you with the possibility to upload a relevant documenters (max. 1 MB each).</p>
<p>2.2. Name of the lead organisation of your project</p>	<p>Please use the full legal name.</p>
<p>2.3. What is the legal form of the project lead organisation? (Private company, research institute, public authority, etc.)</p>	<p>Please describe the legal form using 200 character(s) max.</p>
<p>2.4. Address of the project lead organisation</p>	<p>Please use the provided address lines to provide the full address including street, city/town, postal code and country.</p>
<p>2.5 Other organisations in the project consortium Please give details on the other organisations in the project consortium. For each organisation include Organisation name/Organisation type/Town or city and region/Country.</p>	<p>Here you will be asked to complete a table providing an overview of the organisations, their types, location and role for your project.</p>
<p>2.6 The governance structure of the project consortium Describe the roles and responsibilities of the organisations within the project consortium</p>	<p>You will have a text box to describe the roles and responsibilities in your consortium. You will be allowed to upload supporting documents (of maximum file size 1 MB each).</p> <p>Please do not just describe your partner organisations, but provide a concise</p>



Question	Guidance
	<p>description of your consortium rationale. Who does what and why? Explain the governance structure so that it is clearly understandable for persons not involved in the project.</p> <p>You will have space of 2,000 characters max</p>
<p>2.7 The project team</p>	<p>Present in 5,000 characters max an overview of project personnel, including short bios (5-10 lines each max) of key members involved in the activities of the project. The specific project role of each individual should be made clear. If you have an existing organisation chart for the project team, and CVs, please upload these as supporting documents (1 MB per upload max).</p>
<p>2.8 What other support/institutional backing do you have?</p>	<p>Outline in 3,000 characters max any support for the project from regional or national institutions such as industry bodies, enterprise agencies, government departments, or other relevant organisations. Support described should be specific to the project and confirmed (not potential) in some form.</p> <p>If you have any supporting documents (e.g. letters of support, investment protocol of S3P-Industry partnership), please upload these here.</p>
<p>Part 3 – Level of project development</p> <p>The purpose of this section is to understand how far you have already developed your project. Please indicate, for a range of typical investment project development actions, whether you have already completed them ('yes'), are working on them or expect them to be completed in the next 3 months ('In progress'), or if they are either not planned or will only be completed in more than 3 months ('No'). If you tick 'Yes' or 'In progress', you will be asked to provide details.</p> <p>The wider aim of this section is to understand the rationale and structure of your project, and the potential investment model. It specifies the maturity of your project.</p>	
<p>Stage 1 – Project idea</p> <p>This stage concerns the very basic elements of the project.</p>	
<p>3.1 Project summary</p> <p>In non-technical language, describe the project, its objectives, and its services/solutions offered. Indicate the relevant industry sectors.</p>	<p>In an open text box you are asked to summarise your project (maximum 3,000 characters). Be concise and clear in your description. Use this box as an opportunity to give outsiders a basic understanding of why you are doing this project, how you plan to do it and what it should serve for.</p> <p>Do not just copy+paste generic project descriptions. Additional more technical information can be uploaded (max. 1 MB per file).</p>

Question	Guidance
<p>3.2 Private sector engagement Describe any confirmed or documented interest from other private sector organisations, including potential investors.</p>	<p>Summarise concisely and clearly form (2,000 characters max) mentioning names and types of private sector organisations and/or investors how they are or want to be involved in your project. Documented interest is a strong asset here, such as letters of support from businesses you have engaged with. Do industry actors intend to make use of any service-based outputs? Have businesses agreed to sponsor the project? Have business representatives met with project staff or attended project presentations? Describe any engagement and substantiate it where possible by using the uploading option (e.g. letters of support).</p>
<p>Stage 2 – Business plan development This stage focuses on the different typical aspects of a business plan and assesses which of those you have already accomplished.</p>	
<p>3.3 Customer segments (Yes, In progress, No) You have identified and specified the customer segments of your project (who will your project serve?)</p>	<p>You have identified who your project will serve and who will make use of your offer.</p>
<p>Describe who will your project serve. Provide details on the customer segments of your project.</p>	<p>The customer segments define the different groups of people or organisations your project aims to reach and serve.</p>
<p>3.4 Market Research (Yes, In progress, No) You have done market research and identified the main competitors</p>	<p>You have gathered information about target markets, target customers and main competitors. You have identified your competitors' weaknesses and strengths.</p>
<p>Describe the results of your market research</p>	<p>Your market research results analysis should provide information on the needs of the market and its size as well as characteristics of your main competition.</p>
<p>3.5 Unique Value Proposition (UVP) (Yes, In progress, No) You have identified and specified the value proposition of your project (What problems are you solving, what needs will you satisfy, and why are you best placed to do it?)</p>	<p>You understand what the underlying reason for making use of your offer is. You have identified the problems your offer is solving. You know why a customer or user would request your product/service/facility.</p>
<p>Describe the Unique Value Proposition of the project, i.e. the competitive advantage of your investment idea. Particular focus should be given on how it will address an identified market demand in an effective way.</p>	<p>The UVP of your projects is all about what it will offer to solve a problem or set of problems experienced by your customer segments.</p> <p>Explain in a clear and concise way what the problems are, how your project generates value to address the problems, how this offer sets your project apart from others and why this is needed. Present the rationale of your project specifying the existing market failure or unsatisfied demand for your service/product or how you are able to improve the life/work of others.</p>
<p>3.6 Channels (Yes, In progress, No)</p>	<p>You understand which channels of communication and delivery of</p>



Question	Guidance
You have identified and specified the channels through which your value propositions are delivered to the customers/users (What communication, distribution etc. channels?)	services/products you could and aim to use with your product/service. You have a plan for how you will interact with customers/clients/users.
Describe which channels of communication and delivery of services/products you aim to use to reach your potential clients or users	Explain in a clear and concise way how you will deliver your value proposition – your services/products to customers. Are you planning to provide your services online or offline? Directly or through intermediaries (e.g. networks of other organisations)?
3.7 Revenue streams (Yes, In progress, No) You have identified and specified the revenue stream(s) that the project will generate	You understand how to generate revenue from your project. You know how to make or collect sufficient money to keep your project sustainable.
Describe the revenue streams.	<p>Revenues relate specifically to financial inflows that are generated through the delivery of your UVP through project activities. Note that details of funding/investment from external sources should not be included here.</p> <p>Depending on your project, this may include pro rata chargeable services (e.g. where users pay by the hour or by the day), subscription fees, commissions (e.g. on useable IP) Provide a concise description of (max. 3,000 characters) of the forms and quantities of revenue your project will generate.</p> <p>Upload options provide you with the possibility to substantiate your descriptions (max. 1 MB each).</p>
Please complete and upload the Excel file 'Project financial framework.xlsx' here.	<p>It is essential that you complete and upload the accompanying Excel file 'Project financial framework.xlsx'. This can be downloaded from the TAF application page here.</p> <p>The form includes guidance notes and a completed example.</p>
3.8 Project plan and milestones Please outline the project timescale and key milestones in the project lifespan. If these do not yet exist, please clearly state this.	<p>Provide a clear outline of the project plan, i.e. the timeline for the completion of the project from inception to operation.</p> <p>What are the key tasks, key milestones, and when are they supposed to be completed? Do so in a concise way (max. 1,500 characters) and feel free to substantiate information with supporting documents (e.g. GANTT chart etc.).</p> <p>If you do not yet have this level of detail for your project, please state this clearly.</p>
3.9 Existing IPR arrangements Outline the nature and form of any IPR ownership arrangements between consortium members, for (current or future) project outcomes.	Briefly elaborate on existing IPR agreements on outcomes of the project (max. 2,000 characters).

Question	Guidance
	<p>If you do not yet have this level of detail for your project, please state this clearly.</p> <p>If you have documents that confirm the agreements made, please upload them.</p>
<p>3.10 Risks and bottlenecks Outline identified project risks and mitigation measures, as well as potential bottlenecks of your project.</p>	<p>Risk assessment and mitigation is an important part of project planning. Please outline the key risks in the delivery of your project and the steps you will take to either neutralise them or minimise their impact. Similarly, if there are bottlenecks in the project plan, please elaborate on them.</p>
<p>Part 4 – Investment proposal If you have already completed the activities above, you might have also already used the information collected and prepared to attract funding. This stage focuses on the pitching and feedback received from potential financing entities.</p>	
<p>4.1 Investment volume State the total amount of financial input required to implement your project</p>	<p>What is the total anticipated cost of your project? The estimate should be in Euros.</p>
<p>4.2 You have specified the key resources needed (Yes, In progress, No) You have identified and specified the key resources that are necessary to implement the project, and the associated projects costs (even if estimates)</p>	<p>You have an understanding of which inputs are required; how much money is needed how many staff, etc. You are aware of other inputs (space, buildings, machines)</p>
<p>Describe the key resources required for the project by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing details of the key resources already secured for the project. • Providing details of the additional resources needed, and their associated costs. 	<p>You will have two text boxes to specify the resources required for your project.</p> <p>First, provide an overview of the resources you already have in place. <u>These do not necessarily have to be cash assets (money)</u>, but may be capital or infrastructure, such as access to universities, office space, staff allocated (and paid) etc.</p> <p>Second, provide an overview of additional resources needed and their associated costs (for example, capital such as equipment, operational costs such as the remaining person days needed to implement the project). Add specific numbers to quantify costs where possible. Estimates are helpful where exact numbers are not yet known.</p> <p>Upload options provide you with the possibility to substantiate your descriptions (max. 1 MB each).</p>
<p>4.3 Sources of funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the secured financial commitments from partners for the project • Describe the envisaged or already secured sources of external funding or investment for the project 	<p>Which sources of funding /investment are you interested in obtaining or have already secured to support your project?</p> <p>Please note that funding/investment relates to financial support from external third parties such as the EIB, regional authorities, private investors etc. It is therefore different from</p>



Question	Guidance
	revenue streams, which are generated directly through project activities.
4.4 You have prepared a pitch to investors (Yes, No)	You have translated the business plan into a pitch to engage possible investors.
4.5 You have applied or considered application for a grant (or similar) (Yes, No)	You have already applied or are preparing an application for a grant or other public funding mechanisms, based on your business plan.
4.6 You have discussed the project with a financial institution (Yes, No)	You have already consulted a bank and presented your project to them.
4.7 You have submitted an investment proposal to an investor or a financial institution and received a negative response (Yes, No)	You have already received negative feedback from an investor (e.g. a bank), but still believe the project is worth pursuing.
4.8 You have already secured (some) funding from private investors (Yes, No)	You have some private funding secured, but this is not enough to fulfil all project financing needs.
4.9 You have already secured (some) funding from public entities (regions, EU etc.) (Yes, No)	You have some public funding secured, but this is not enough to fulfil all project financing needs.
Please provide a summary of investment steps you have taken	If you have undertaken any of the six steps above, please provide some further details here to assist the assessment process.
<p>Part 5 - Service request form This final section is an opportunity to outline the advisory services you may require.</p>	
<p>5.1 Choose the most applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You would like support to finalise your business plan. You have a draft investment proposal and would like support to finalise it. You have already submitted a proposal, which was rejected, and you would like support to improve it. 	<p>This question follows the stages of project development as used in Part 3 – Level of project development.</p> <p>Depending on how advanced you are in developing your project, you might require different types of support.</p>
<p>5.2 You expect that TAF support will help you to finalise your business plan in terms of: Product/service, Team, Business model, Market, Marketing and sales – distribution channels, Costs and revenues, Legal matters, Benefits, spill-overs or externalities, IPR, Financials, Investment vehicle, other</p>	<p>This question will only show if you selected in 5.1 that you would like to receive support to finalise your business plan. You should then choose up to 3 types of support, which you feel to be most relevant to your project.</p> <p>Please note that final agreements on the type of support will be made during the inception phase of selected project support. This question however helps in structuring the types of inputs needed. If you select 'other', please specify the request (500 characters max).</p>



Question	Guidance
<p>5.3 You have a draft investment proposal and you expect this service will support you to: Review the team/HR, Review the product/service description, Review the market, Review the business model, Review marketing and sales, Review costs and revenues, Review of financials and funding, Review the pre-money valuation and assets, Review compliance with legislation, Prepare for due diligence, Create a new investment vehicle, Finalise governance rules, Review the IPR, other</p>	<p>This question will only show if you selected in 5.1 that you would like to receive support to draft and finalise your investment proposal. You should then choose up to 3 types of support, which you feel to be most relevant to your project.</p> <p>Please note that final agreements on the type of support will be made during the inception phase of selected project support. This question however helps in structuring the types of inputs needed. If you select 'other', please specify the request (500 characters max).</p>
<p>5.4 You already submitted an investment proposal to an investor and received a negative response. Recommendations for improvement were about: Team/HR, Costs and revenues, Financials and funding, Benefits, spill-overs or externalities, Pre-money valuation and assets, IPR, Public/private contribution set-up, Investment vehicle, Governance rules, other</p>	<p>This question will only show if you selected in 5.1 that you have already submitted a proposal, which was rejected, and you would like to receive support to improve it. You should then choose up to 3 types of support, which you feel to be most relevant to your project.</p> <p>Please note that final agreements on the type of support will be made during the inception phase of selected project support. This question however helps in structuring the types of inputs needed. In case you select 'other', please specify the request (500 characters max)</p>
<p>5.5 Do you have any other specific needs you wish to discuss with the supporting experts?</p>	<p>Please use the text box (max 3,000 characters) provided to describe any additional needs you have, which you might want to discuss with experts and that could potentially be addressed by the TAF. Also elaborate (if possible) how you think TAF experts could be best suited to address the problem/need.</p>