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# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS OPEN CALL

OPENING: 23 of September 2024

CLOSING: 25 of November 2024 at 17:00 Brussels time / 10:00AM CST\*

Project Website <https://ngisargasso.eu>

Open Call platform: <https://cascadefunding.sploro.eu/application/new?program=ngi-sargasso-open-call-5>

\* The deadline for submission is as stated in this Guidelines document. Please note that the platform for submission's time depends on the user's configured timezone and may or may not coincide with the correct time (this depends on the user, not the platform for submission). Any discrepancies in system time will not be grounds for deadline extension.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

NGI Sargasso is a project that focuses on strengthening EU cooperation and strategic partnerships with the USA and Canada in the Next Generation Internet. The project has been organized to support all Internet innovators in the areas of trust and Internet data sovereignty, trusted open search and discovery, and Internet Architecture and Decentralized Technologies. With NGI Sargasso, an international ecosystem will be created with the presence of the USA and Canada in order to promote the values of Europe beyond its borders, such as openness, inclusion, transparency, privacy, cooperation, and data protection.

## 2. GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROJECT

### 2.1 WHAT IS NGI SARGASSO?

NGI Sargasso is a project that aims to revolutionize the Next Generation Internet technologies, services, and standards, and contribute to the evolution of the Internet according to a human-centric approach of the internet commons. It focuses on strengthening EU cooperation and strategic partnerships with the USA and Canada in the Next Generation Internet.

### 2.2 HOW DOES THE PROJECT WORK?

NGI Sargasso is a project that aims to revolutionize the Next Generation Internet technologies, services, and standards, and contribute to the evolution of the Internet according to a human-centric approach of the internet commons. It focuses on strengthening EU cooperation and strategic partnerships with the USA and Canada in the Next Generation Internet.

### 2.3 HOW MUCH FUNDING WILL BE DISTRIBUTED?

The total budget available for this 5<sup>th</sup> Open Call is 1.200.000€. Apart from the grant amount, NGI Sargasso also provides mentoring, coaching, and networking opportunities to help applicants achieve their project goals.

Overall, NGI Sargasso counts with 4,8M€ which will be distributed in the coming three years.

The **maximum amount of funding** that can be granted **to a single small organization** (SMEs, Startups, NGOs and foundations) for all NGI Sargasso calls combined cannot exceed **€150.000**. For **large RTOs, research centers and Universities**, the **maximum amount of funding is up to €500,000** between all NGI Sargasso open calls. This is because several research groups from the same large organisation may wish to apply to one or more calls.

Should a large entity submit multiple applications, each working group or department will respect the SME funding limit of €150,000. In other words, the limit for the whole entity (university, research centers, RTOs) is €500,000, but each department or research/working group is considered as a small entity. This allows for a more equitable distribution of funds,



with the aim of encouraging a balanced allocation of resources among various organisations and avoiding an excessive concentration of funding in a single institution.

### 3. GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE OPEN CALL

#### 3.1 WHO CAN APPLY TO THIS OPEN CALL?

NGI Sargasso call is open to all types of organizations, including SMEs, startups, research centers, RTOs, universities, non-profit organizations, and foundations that are legally established in an eligible EU Member State or a Horizon Europe associated country and twinning with a USA and/or Canada counterpart. It is important to note that the applicant and the USA/Canada counterpart cannot be linked or associated entities or have any other legally binding relation that qualifies them as a company group.

The eligible countries for this Open Call are:

- ❑ The Member States (MS) of the European Union (EU), including their outermost regions;
  - In the case of **Hungary**, although it is an MS of the EU, according to Council Implementing Decision 2022/2506, no legal commitments should be entered into with any public interest trust established based on the Hungarian Law IX of 2021 or with any entity maintained by said public interest trust.
- ❑ The Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) linked to the Member States<sup>1</sup>;
- ❑ Horizon Europe associated countries at the time the NGI Sargasso grant entered into force (January 1, 2023), which are: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Tunisia, Türkiye, and Ukraine. The ones not included in this list, are not eligible.

#### 3.2 CAN A UK ENTITY APPLY?

UK is NOT eligible for NGI Sargasso because became associated to Horizon Europe after January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023.

#### 3.3 IS IT NECESSARY TO FIND A US/CANADA PARTNER THROUGH THE BROKERAGE SYSTEM, OR CAN ONE BE FOUND/ARRANGED DIRECTLY?

If you already have a connection in the US or Canada, you can proceed directly to the next step and initiate the application process when the call opens.

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<sup>1</sup> Entities from Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) are eligible for funding under the same conditions as entities from the Member States to which the OCT in question is linked.



### 3.4 IS ANY COMBINATION OF THE TWO PARTNERS POSSIBLE?

There are two options of teams:

- EU entity + US/Canada counterpart
- EU entity + US entity + Canadian Entity

### 3.5 CAN INTERNATIONAL/INTERGOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES LOCATED IN THE US (SUCH AS THE UNITED NATIONS) BE CONSIDERED ELIGIBLE COLLABORATORS?

Yes, there is no requirement for US/Canadian entities. *"In principle, any type of entity based in Canada, or in the USA can be a partner in this initiative. The only restriction is that the USA or Canadian partner cannot be a related or associated partner of the European beneficiary. Entities belonging to the same group (i.e. the parent company and its subsidiaries) cannot be considered as a valid "consortium" (page 12 of the guidelines), but consider that "for the development of NGI Sargasso, it is crucial that the proposals presented from the European side, start from close collaboration with entities from the USA and/or Canada" (page 5 of the guidelines). "Proposals should state a clear and concise explanation of how the collaboration between the European organization and the USA and/or Canada entity will be structured, considering roles, communication mechanisms, synergies, and mutually identified benefits of the collaboration".*

### 3.6 WOULD A MULTINATIONAL BE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

Any type of entity based in the US/Canada is eligible to be a counterpart. EU or Associated Member States applicant should be any of the following:

- Universities, RTOs and research centres: academic and research institutions with a focus on developing novel knowledge areas and technologies aligned with the focus of NGI Sargasso.
- NGOs and foundations: non-profit organizations and foundations that work under the NGI areas of knowledge and technologies.
- SMEs and startups: small and medium-sized enterprises and startups that focus on developing innovative solutions related to NGI Sargasso's areas of focus.

### 3.7 WHICH REQUIREMENTS MUST BE FULFILLED?

To be eligible for the NGI Sargasso open call, applicants must meet a series of eligibility criteria which can be found in Section 5 of the Guidelines.



### 3.8 WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS IS THE CALL LOOKING FOR?

The NGI Sargasso open call seeks innovative projects that address the challenges and opportunities of Next Generation Internet (NGI) technologies. The call is open to projects that use or develop NGI knowledge areas using, among others, base technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and DLT (Distributed Ledger Technology), Data, Cybersecurity, 6G and novel networks, IoT (Internet of Things), open-source hardware and software, software architectures, etc. The call aims to select projects that demonstrate excellence, innovation, and quality, with a clear and detailed plan of proposed activities aligned with the project objectives and developed within realistic timeframes.

### 3.9 CAN WE SUBMIT MORE THAN ONE APPLICATION?

Yes, it is possible to submit more than one application to the NGI Sargasso open call. However, each application must be for a different project and must meet all the eligibility criteria and requirements established in the call. It is important to note that submitting multiple applications does not increase the chances of being selected, and each application will be evaluated independently based on its own merits.

If more than one proposal from the same organisation results as selected, the **maximum amount of funding** that can be granted **to a single small organization** (SMEs, Startups, NGOs and foundations) for all NGI Sargasso calls combined cannot exceed **€150.000**. For **large RTOs, research centres and Universities**, the **maximum amount of funding is up to €500,000** between all NGI Sargasso open calls. This is because several research groups from the same large organisation may wish to apply to one or more calls.

Should a large entity submit multiple applications, each working group or department will respect the SME funding limit of €150,000. In other words, the limit for the whole entity (university, research centers, RTOs) is €500,000, but each department or research/working group is considered as a small entity. This allows for a more equitable distribution of funds, with the aim of encouraging a balanced allocation of resources among various organisations and avoiding an excessive concentration of funding in a single institution.

### 3.10 HOW CAN I APPLY TO THIS OPEN CALL?

To apply to the NGI Sargasso open call, you must follow these steps:

1. Check the guidelines for applicants to determine if your organization is eligible for the program.
2. Apply online and answer all mandatory questions (with no exception) at <https://cascadefunding.sploro.eu>. Applicants must strictly adhere to the form provided by the NGI Sargasso consortium via the Sploro platform, which defines sections and the overall length.
3. Submit all the requested documents established in the call. The lack of any of the documents will negatively affect the eligibility of the applicant for the evaluation process.



4. Be aware that certain documents, which will be required for each applicant selected for the program and signing a sub-grantee agreement, may take time to acquire.

### 3.11 HOW LONG SHOULD PROPOSALS BE?

Proposals must follow the format provided in the online form template, which should be completed online through the [Sploro platform](#). The form specifies the maximum number of characters allowed in each section. Applicants are advised to carefully follow the guidelines provided in the "Guidelines for Applicants" document and ensure compliance with all formatting and content requirements.

### 3.12 IS THERE A LIMITATION ON THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS PER TEAM?

NGI Sargasso does not establish specific restrictions regarding the minimum or maximum number of team members. However, it is important to note that for the maximum budget offered, we believe that including more than 5 members on a team may pose management and coordination challenges that could hinder the efficient achievement of project objectives. Therefore, while there is no strict limit, it is strongly advised to carefully assess and justify the inclusion of each team member based on the nature and requirements of the project to ensure successful execution.

### 3.13 WHAT ARE THE EXPECTED DELIVERABLES?

Regarding the deliverables, at the beginning of the implementation, a Coaching plan would be developed, and the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) would be defined. A brief review of the KPIs would be conducted before each payment milestone. The number of milestones would depend on whether the project is for 3, 6, or 9 months.

### 3.14 WHAT IS THE DEADLINE FOR PROPOSAL SUBMISSION?

The deadline for proposal submission is November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 17:00 Brussels time (10:00 AM CST). It is important to note that only submissions made through the official online submission platform will be considered eligible. It is strongly advised not to wait until the last minute to submit the proposal.

### 3.15 WILL THERE BE MORE OPEN CALLS?

No, there will not be more open calls. Open Call 5 is the last one.





### 3.16 What to do in case of technical problem?

At the event that you encounter technical issues, please contact the helpdesk clearly explaining what you are experiencing, including any error messages or unexpected behaviour. Specify the steps leading up to the problem, so that we can replicate it.

Include a timestamp screenshot of your entire screen or the specific part where the issue is visible. Ensure that the screenshot includes the system clock or another form of a timestamp.

If applicable, provide any other relevant details such as the device, operating system, and browser you are using.

Do not wait until the last moment to report technical issues to our helpdesk. We recommend that you attempt to submit your work at least 48 hours before the official deadline to avoid any unforeseen problems.

## 4. QUESTIONS RELATED TO EVALUATION.

### 4.1 WHAT HAPPENS AFTER PROPOSALS ARE SUBMITTED?

After proposals are submitted, they will go through an evaluation process that includes an eligibility criteria check, remote evaluation by independent experts, and a final selection based on the overall score of the proposals.

### 4.2 WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING PROPOSALS?

The proposals will be evaluated based on three criteria: Alignment, Excellence, and Impact.

- Alignment: Proposals must align with the call objectives, challenges, areas of knowledge, and technologies.
- Excellence: Clarity and pertinence of the objectives. Excellence, innovation, and quality of the project. Explanation of the collaboration structure between European and US and/or Canada entities.
- Impact: Relevance and potential for economic, social, and environmental impact.

### 4.3 HOW MUCH TIME DOES IT TAKE FOR THE EVALUATION PROCESS?

The evaluation process will take a maximum of three weeks from the closure of the call.

### 4.4 WILL WE GET A COMMUNICATION WHEN THE EVALUATION PROCESS ENDS?

Yes, applicants will be informed about the evaluation results. At the end of the evaluation process, all proposals will be ranked based on their scores, and the best proposals will be invited to sign the sub-grant agreement and participate in the program. The list of accepted proposals at remote evaluation will be published, as well as the information about the non-



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eligible proposals. All applicants will be informed about the evaluation results. Therefore, applicants will receive communication when the evaluation process ends.

#### 4.5 WHO WILL BE PART OF THIS COACHING PROGRAM?

The coaching plan will be managed by Mobile World Capital Barcelona. At the beginning of the programme, you will define with them your needs and a set of KPIs, and they will adapt the planned activities/experts involved, etc.

### 5. QUESTIONS RELATED TO FUNDING.

#### 5.1 HOW MUCH FUNDING MIGHT EACH APPLICANT GET?

The **maximum amount of funding** that can be granted **to a single small organization** (SMEs, Startups, NGOs and foundations) for all NGI Sargasso calls combined cannot exceed **€150,000**. For **large RTOs, research centres and Universities**, the **maximum amount of funding is up to €500,000** between all NGI Sargasso open calls. This is because several research groups from the same large organisation may wish to apply to one or more calls.

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#### 5.2 HOW MANY TEAM MEMBERS WILL NGI SARGASSO SUPPORT?

Regarding the number of team members, there is no specific number. They should just have the adequate profiles and planned dedication to successfully implement the project proposed. Teams must be composed by one European entity together with a Canadian and/or US entity. The number of people inside the team is up to the applicants to decide.

#### 5.3 WHEN DO SELECTED TEAMS RECEIVE THE FUNDING?

Selected teams will receive the funding in various stages depending on the project's duration, contingent upon meeting designated milestones or KPIs and delivering specific outputs. For 3-month projects, there will be two payments; for 6-month projects, there will be three payments, and for 9-month projects, there will be four payments. The exact timing of these payments will be specified in the payment milestones table, which can be found in the Guidelines for Applicants document.



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#### 5.4 WILL SELECTED TEAMS GET ANY ADDITIONAL SUPPORT ON TOP OF FUNDING?

Yes, selected teams may receive additional support on top of funding. The NGI Sargasso project offers the OnCampus program, which provides business guidance, individualized assistance, entry to a wide-ranging network of important stakeholders, expert insights, and marketing prospects. The selected teams will commence identifying the most suitable range of services for their training during the OnCampus program. Additionally, the NGI Sargasso project may provide other forms of support, such as mentoring, coaching, and networking opportunities.

#### 5.5 WILL NGI SARGASSO MONITOR THE PROGRESS OF THE PROJECTS?

Yes, NGI Sargasso will monitor the progress of the projects. The sub-grantee funding agreement will include a set of research, business, and technical milestones linked to a set of KPIs, to which the project will associate the payment at the end of each phase. The project mentors are responsible for assessing the milestones and triggering the payment process. Additionally, the NGI Sargasso consortium will provide coaching and support to the selected teams throughout the project's duration. The selected teams will also be required to submit regular progress reports to the NGI Sargasso consortium, which will be used to monitor the project's progress and ensure that it is aligned with the project's objectives.

### 6. TECHNICAL QUESTIONS.

#### 6.1 APPLICANTS HAVE TO BE CITIZENS OF THE US OR CANADA?

Applicants are not citizens but legal entities. Those are the ones being from the US, Canada or EU/associated Member states.

#### 6.2 WILL ANY WEBINARS BE RECORDED?

Yes, there will be a couple of webinars per call which will be recorded and shared in social media.

