European data space
for smart communities

Call for Pilots Manual

Call for Pilots of European Data Space for Smart Communities

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition	Abbreviation	Definition
AGA	Annotated Grant Agreement	F&T	Funding and Tenders Portal
AI	Artificial Intelligence	FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
ALTAI	AI HLEG's trustworthy AI assessment list	GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
API	Application Programming Interface	IDC	International Data Corporation
ACM	Access Control Management	ISO	International Organization for Standardization
CCIS	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia	KPI	Key Performance Indicator
CEF	Connecting Europe Facility	LORDIMAS	Digital maturity assessment tool for regions and cities
CET	Central European Time	MIMs	Minimal Interoperability Mechanisms
CfP	Call for Pilots	MS	Member States
CFS	Certificate on Financial Statements	OASC	Open & Agile Smart Cities
DA	Data Act	OCD	Ownership Control Declaration
DGA	Data Governance Act	OCT	Overseas Countries and Territories
DEP	Digital Europe Programme	OLAF	European Anti-Fraud Office
DeployAI	EU's AI-on-Demand Platform	PDF	Portable Document Format
DS4SSCC	Data Space for Smart and Sustainable Cities and Communities project (preparatory action)	SLA	Service Level Agreements
DS4SSCC-DEP	European data space for smart communities project (deployment action)	SF	Stakeholder Forum
DSSC	Data Spaces Support Centre	Simpl	EU programme for Smart Middleware Platform, comprising of Simpl Open, Simpl Labs and Simpl Live
DTU	Technical University of Denmark	TalTech	Tallinn University of Technology
EC	European Commission	TEF	Testing and Experimentation Facility (CitCom.ai)
ECA	European Court of Auditors	ToR	Terms of Reference
EDIC	EU Digital Infrastructure Consortium	URL	Uniform Resource Locator
EDIH	European Digital Innovation Hub	VAT	Value Added Tax
EEA	European Economic Area	W3C	World Wide Web Consortium
EU	European Union		

Glossary

Term	Explanation
Blueprint	As per the Data Spaces Support Centre glossary, blueprint stands for "a consistent, coherent and comprehensive set of guidelines to support the implementation, deployment and maintenance of data spaces." In the context of DS4SSCC-DEP, the blueprint refers to the data spaces blueprint for smart communities, developed during the DS4SSCC preparatory phase.
Data Cooperation Canvas	The Data Cooperation Canvas is a tool that helps various stakeholders describe existing, or explore potential new, data cooperations. The canvas is designed as part of the preparatory actions for the Data Space for Smart and Sustainable Cities and Communities (DS4SSCC) of the European Commission.
DS4SSCC-DEP Consortium	The consortium of the deployment action for the European data space for smart communities is comprised of 8 partners: the Technical University of Denmark (DTU (to exit the consortium on 01.06.2024)), the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia ICT Association (CCIS), the FIWARE Foundation, IMEC, International Data Corporation (IDC), Open & Agile Smart Cities (OASC), Serendipity and Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech).
Eligibility Check Grid	Checklist used by the DS4SSCC-DEP consortium to check Call for Pilots applications against various eligibility criteria (legal, financial, technical, ethical).
Ethical Board	A distinct group of experts that is established to assess ethical issues in the DS4SSCC-DEP project and propose mitigation measures.
Evaluation Committee	A dedicated group of three experts from both DS4SSCC-DEP partners and external stakeholders who are responsible for evaluating the Call for Pilots applications. Most probably, several Evaluation Committees will be established to evaluate the Call for Pilots across three rounds.
Evaluation Team	Selected people from the DS4SSCC-DEP project partners who are responsible for organising the whole evaluation process and running the pre-screening of applications. This team is also responsible for the final ranking of proposals and the final selection of the pilots.
Jira	Issue & Project Tracking Software (Atlassian).
Lead Partner	A legal entity that is responsible for the pilot implementation and carries out the coordination of the pilot. It is preferred that the lead partner is a local or regional public administration in the EU Member States.
Pilot Consortium	A collaboration of two or more participating organisations teaming up to prepare, implement, and follow up on a project or an activity within a project.
Pilot Project	The initial small-scale implementation used to prove the viability of a project idea.
Pilot Site	Local or regional administration (as an area) where project ideas are tested and are assisted during project implementation.

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Introduction

This Call for Pilots Manual provides a detailed overview of the scope and conditions of the piloting activities as part of the deployment action for European data space for smart communities. It acts as the main Call text that includes detailed information about the Call for Pilots process, including specific conditions regarding legal, financial, business and organisational, technical, and ethical perspectives. Furthermore, it gives guidance on the upcoming implementation period, concerning the support pilots will receive and various steps for assessment and monitoring.

The aim of the deployment action for European data space for smart communities, and its Call for Pilots is to validate in practice an EU-wide cross-sectorial data space, and to advance its development and implementation to support policy priorities of cities and communities within the European Union, including the green-digital transformation based on secure and sovereign data infrastructure.

The DS4SSCC-DEP project, and the open call for pilots which comes in several waves, builds on and evolves the governance and technical blueprint. The blueprint was established by the preparatory action DS4SSCC, which comes out of joint efforts of the Living-in.EU movement that represents local governments in the EU through relevant networks and EU institutions.

The scope of the data space includes alignment with the overall “2030 Digital Decade'' EU policy initiative and related specific legislative trains, such as the Interoperable Europe Act. It is part of the Common European Data Spaces “family” and works closely with the Data Spaces Support Centre (DSSC), especially on cross-sectorial aspects such as minimal interoperability.

On the practical level, the action, ensures integration with the broader ecosystem of EU data spaces through links to other data space deployment actions, the EU Digital Infrastructure Consortium (EDIC) on Local Digital Twins, the AI and Robotics Testing and Experimentation Facility (TEF) CitCom.ai and the EU AI-on-Demand Platform (DeployAI), the Smart Middleware Platform (SIMPL) and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) Operational Digital Platforms.

The pilots aim to provide feedback from practice as more firm guidance is put into regulatory instruments, such as requirements for procurement, operation and reporting, starting from a baseline of high-value datasets to add value by using data from different domains and models such as traffic management, weather events, energy management, and pollution control. This initiative aims to foster innovation towards a more resilient Europe, supporting local businesses and ecosystems, and emphasising ethical considerations and AI-enabled local solutions, thereby enhancing the conditions for citizens and communities across Europe.

Executive Summary - Call for Pilots at a Glance

Overall Vision and Objectives

As one of the central activities in the DS4SSCC-DEP project, the aim of the piloting activities is to validate in practice an EU-wide cross-sectorial data space, and to advance its development and implementation to support policy priorities of cities and communities within the European Union, including the green-digital transformation based on secure and sovereign data infrastructure.

In particular, the Call for Pilots (**CfP**) aims to attract local or regional public administrations and their partners (e.g., companies, civil society organisations, and academia) to apply with their specific cross-sectoral use cases of data sharing that they intend to implement by using the blueprint developed by the preparatory action for Data Space for Sustainable and Smart Cities and Communities (**DS4SSCC**).

Target Audience

- The Call for Pilots is specifically designed for **local and regional public administrations in the EU and their partners** (e.g., companies, academia, NGOs). It is preferred that the Lead Partner of the consortium is an EU local administration.
- All partners need to provide a **Letter of Commitment** to declare their motivation to carry out the pilot.

Eligible consortia

- Must consist of **at least two local or regional public administrations** from different EU member states (MS)**,** the Overseas Countries and Territories linked to the MS; and/or Digital Europe Programme Associated countries.
- The pilot consortium members are subject to restrictions due to security reasons. Entities must not be controlled from a country that is **not an eligible country**. All entities (except entities that are validated as public bodies by the EU countries) have to fill in and submit an **Ownership Control Declaration** within **14 days** after awarding.

Scope

The pilot consortia must create new data services from the data sharing across at least two areas specified below, but can also include other European Green Deal domains:

- Predictive traffic management/sustainable mobility planning;
- Data-services related to weather, climate and extreme weather events;
- Management of energy flows in a city/community specific context and in conjunction with other sectors;
- Zero pollution actions (e.g., air, water, soil pollution or waste);
- Any other domain falling under the New European Bauhaus initiative (urban design, building management, public services, nature-based solutions, amongst others).

The pilots should demonstrate the applicability of DS4SSCC blueprint and feasibility of federating with other data spaces on an European level. Pilots will receive support and guidance for these objectives throughout the piloting activities.

We strongly recommend participants of the CfP to get acquainted with the preparatory action and the established blueprint, as it will serve as the foundation for proposed solutions. The blueprint, along with some example themes and supplementary materials from the preparatory action, are accessible via the project website.[1]

Submission and Piloting Timeline

Table 1 – Expected Timeline of the Application and Piloting Process

Submission round	Submission period	Number of Selected Pilots	Implementation period
First	June 1st 09:00 AM CET – August 31st 23.59 CET (3 months)	1-2	November 2024 – April 2026 (18 months)
Second	September – November 2024 (3 months)	4-6	March 2025 - August 2026 (18 months)
Third	December 2024 – February 2025 (3 months)	4-*(adjusted)*	May 2025 – August 2026 (16 months)

Available Funding & Co-financing

The total EU contribution for the DS4SSCC-DEP pilots is 15 300 000 euros, which is planned to be distributed among 10 – 12 chosen pilot consortiums. On top of that, applicants are expected to bear at least 50% of the pilot's total costs, as the direct co-financing model applies to the CfP.

Co-financing has to be a dedicated cost as indicated directly in the budget for the pilot and has to be auditable. To be eligible, co-financing cannot include in-kind resources not explicitly monetised in the pilot budget, and all activities must observe relevant regulations, including state-aid rules and risks of double funding.

This approach ensures shared investment and commitment from both the funding body (EC) and the applicants, aligning with the principles of partnership and joint responsibility. The model is designed to encourage meaningful participation and investment in the pilot, ensuring that the applicants are equally invested in the success and sustainability of their initiatives.

[1] The project website can be accessed at https://www.ds4sscc.eu

1 Paving the Path towards European Data Space for Smart Communities

1.1 Preparatory Action and Data Space Blueprint

The preparatory action for Data Spaces for Smart and Sustainable Cities and Communities (DS4SSCC) that preceded the DS4SSCC-DEP project defined the blueprint of a data space for European smart communities, which stands for a set of guidelines and instruments for the deployment of the data space. In addition, a roadmap for the data space deployment together with capacity-building resources was delivered. These outputs act as an enabler of the EU Green Deal and Sustainable Development Goals.

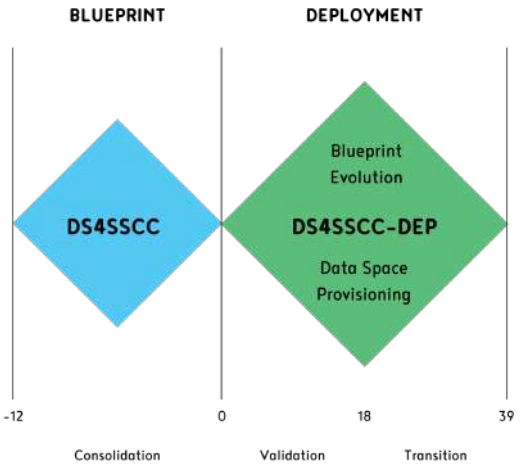

Figure 1 – From DS4SSCC Blueprint Definition to Data Space Deployment

The preparatory action closely aligned itself with the Living-in.EU movement, and as such, much of its results are community-driven. Specifically, the preparatory action raised a community of more than 200 individuals in accordance with the quadruple helix which it refers to as the Stakeholder Forum. The current deployment phase carries on this community and leverages it to deploy data spaces through foreseen pilots across three application and implementation rounds.

The DS4SSCC blueprint includes several items:

- **A multi-stakeholder governance scheme**[2] which defines the rules and possible schemas that the ecosystem of the data space may follow to regulate the participation in the data space.
- **A technical blueprint** which provides a *Catalogue of Specifications*[3] for the basic building blocks that a data space infrastructure should include; and an *architecture model*[4] which indicates how these building blocks must be deployed and how the data platform of the community should evolve to be onboarded in a data space.
- **A CookBook**[5] that contains a set of recipes and tips for using the technical blueprint.

[2] Deliverable 2.2 Multi-Stakeholder Governance Scheme, DS4SSCC preparatory action <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/63718ba2d90d0263d7fc1857/t/651ea670a884c256d84f4864/1696507511589/DS4SSCC_D2.2+Multi-stakeholder+governance+scheme.docx.pdf

[3] Available at https://inventory.ds4sscc.eu/catalogue-of-specifications and full report at https://drive.google.com/file/d/174_g8dAM3yxRiyTFUSvxvE4zEgYiAlaz/view

[4] Deliverable 3.2 Architecture Model, DS4SSCC preparatory action <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/63718ba2d90d0263d7fc1857/t/651ec20acfcf626ce73d97df/1696514592952/DS4SSCC_D3.2_Architecture+Model.pdf>

[5] Available at https://inventory.ds4sscc.eu/reference-architecture

In addition to the blueprint, preparatory action DS4SSCC also generated a roadmap[6] with all the recommended steps to go through; the different phases of maturity in the data space development, and capacity building resources.[7] Complementary, several use cases as examples of different governance schemas and architectures at different stages of development are described.

The blueprint will evolve during the deployment phase of the data space, mainly through the pilot implementations and feedback provided by the pilot consortiums. The awarded pilots must deploy the above mentioned elements of the blueprint and validate them in their specific context and environment.

1.2 Aim of the Call for Pilots

The aim of the deployment action and its CfP is to validate in practice an EU-wide cross-sectorial data space, and to advance its development and implementation to support policy priorities of cities and communities within the European Union, including the green-digital transformation based on secure and sovereign data infrastructure. The DS4SSCC-DEP project and its CfP build on and evolve the governance and technical blueprint. The scope of the data space includes alignment with the overall “2030 Digital Decade'' EU policy initiative and related specific legislative initiatives, such as the Interoperable Europe Act. It is part of the Common European Data Spaces “family”, funded through DEP, and works closely with the Data Spaces Support Centre (**DSSC**) especially on cross-sectorial aspects such as minimal interoperability.

On the practical level, the action ensures integration with the broader ecosystem of EU data spaces through links to other data space deployment actions, the EU Digital Infrastructure Consortium (**EDIC**) on Local Digital Twins, the AI and Robotics Testing and Experimentation Facility (**TEF**) CitCom.ai and the EU AI-on-Demand Platform (**DeployAI**), the Smart Middleware Platform (**Simpl**) and the Connecting Europe Facility (**CEF**) Operational Digital Platforms.

The pilots aim to provide feedback from practice as more firm guidance is put into regulatory instruments, such as requirements for procurement, operation and reporting, starting from a baseline of high-value datasets to add value by using data from different domains and models such as traffic management, weather events, energy management, and pollution control. This initiative aims to foster innovation towards a more resilient Europe, supporting local businesses and ecosystems, and emphasising ethical considerations and AI-enabled local solutions, thereby enhancing the conditions for citizens and communities across Europe.

1.3 About the European Data Space for Smart Communities

The European Data Space for Smart Communities (DS4SSCC-DEP) initiative is a pivotal deployment following the preparatory action for a Data Space for Sustainable and Smart Cities and Communities (DS4SSCC). Emphasising sustainability aspects and diversity in communities, DS4SSCC developed a multi-stakeholder data governance scheme, created a blueprint for the European DS4SSCC, delivered priority datasets, developed a roadmap towards a mature DS4SSCC, and implemented the data space on various governance levels.

[6] DS4SSCC Roadmap is available at <https://inventory.ds4sscc.eu/roadmap> See also its corresponding report, Deliverable 4.2. Roadmap for implementing a data space for smart and sustainable cities and communities <https://www.ds4sscc.eu/s/D42_DS4SSCC_Action-Plan.pdf>

[7] Available at https://inventory.ds4sscc.eu/roadmap/capacity-building

DS4SSCC-DEP's vision revolves around creating a well-governed data space available for developers and infrastructure providers, aligning with the prospects outlined in Europe's Digital Decade objectives. Our vision is rooted in acknowledging data as a critical asset in contemporary society, akin to essential resources like water or food supplies. DS4SSCC-DEP aims to build a territorial, place-based data space for smart communities. This approach distinguishes itself from sectorial data spaces by encompassing diverse domains, underpinning governance across all levels of society. The key objectives of the project are:

- **Objective 1: Establishing a Federated and Innovative Data Space**. This phase focuses on creating a large-scale data space controlled by public data holders, ensuring alignment with the Smart Middleware Platform and broader data space ecosystems. It also aims to offer middleware service solutions facilitating data sharing and management while refining the blueprint based on gained experience.
- **Objective 2: Pilots and Refinement of the Data Space Blueprint**. Through 10-12 cross-sector data pilots in various EU communities, this objective aims to validate and refine the data space blueprint. Using common high-value data sets, it seeks to create added value by combining data from various domains, contributing to the sustainability plan, and minimising infrastructure investment.
- **Objective 3: Fostering Innovation and Ecosystem Alignment**. Engaging stakeholders, compliance with sector-specific legislation, establishing links with Horizon Europe missions, creating services available via trusted application catalogues, and enhancing ethical considerations and AI-enabled local solutions constitute the focus of this objective.

DS4SSCC-DEP, building upon established European networks, aims to significantly contribute to the sustainability goals of European citizens. It emphasises co-creation, standardisation, business models, strategies for data spaces, and envisions a federated platform.

DS4SSCC-DEP consortium includes the following partners:

2 Call for Pilots Framework

This chapter outlines the all relevant perspectives governing the pre-conditions as well as rights and obligations of the Pilot Consortia. In particular, this section focuses on the legal, financial, technical, business and organisational, and ethical perspectives that Pilot Consortia need to follow.

2.1 Scope

While the aim of the deployment action and its Call for Pilots (**CfP**) is to validate and evolve the governance and technical blueprint, it also has to demonstrate actual services created based on data sharing among data space participants. The pilots should demonstrate the applicability of DS4SSCC-DEP blueprint and feasibility of federating with other data spaces on an European level. Pilots will receive support and guidance for these objectives throughout the piloting activities. Further information in the section “Pilot Support during Implementation Phase”.

The pilot consortia must create new data services from the data sharing across at least two areas specified below, but can also include other European Green Deal domains:[8]

Predictive traffic management/sustainable mobility planning, establishing synergies with the mobility data space and making use of the Sustainable Urban Mobility Indicators, where appropriate.

Data-services related to weather, climate and extreme weather events to facilitate risk prevention, disaster resilience as well as climate change adaptation.

Management of energy flows in a city/community specific context and in conjunction with other sectors.

Zero pollution actions (e.g., air, water, soil pollution or waste).

Any other domain falling under the New European Bauhaus initiative (urban design, building management, public services, nature-based solutions, amongst others).

[8] Digital Europe Programme Cloud Data and TEF (Digital-2@0022-CLOUD-AI-03) call, page 23 <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/digital/wp-call/2022/call-fiche_digital-2022-cloud-ai-03_en.pdf>

We strongly recommend participants of the CfP to get acquainted with the preparatory action and the established blueprint, as it will serve as the foundation for proposed solutions. The blueprint, along with some example themes and supplementary materials from the preparatory action, are accessible via the project website.[9] To describe existing and potential data collaborations for pilots, we suggest participants utilise the freely available **Data Cooperation Canvas,**[10] an integral component designed as part of the preparatory action.

2.2 Legal Framework

2.2.1. Consortia Eligibility

Eligible consortia must consist of **at least two local or regional public administrations** from different EU member states **(MS)** and/or Digital Europe Programme (**DEP**) Associated countries, promoting cross-sectoral collaboration and dealing with the European Green Deal objectives. Those local administrations have to allocate effort in the pilot budget and provide a Letter of Commitment[11]. The local administrations can also involve other eligible parties working with them (e.g., companies, academia, NGOs).

The pilot consortium members are subject to restrictions due to security reasons. Entities must not be controlled by an ineligible country. If there is a risk for such case, entities will be offered an opportunity to provide a guarantee. All entities (except entities that are validated as public bodies by the EU countries) have to fill in and submit an Ownership Control Declaration[12] (**OCD**). OCD must be self-declared at proposal time, and if the pilot is awarded, the official OCD must be provided within **14 days** from the notification date. If a chosen pilot consortium member is found, after assessment, to be controlled by a partner from a non-EU country, they will need to present a guarantee that will be assessed to allow or exclude participation in the pilot project. If a partner is found to be controlled by a DEP-associated country, they will also have to prepare a guarantee that will need to be assessed to allow or not allow their participation in the pilot.

Assessment of the entities, based on the received guarantees, will be done on a case-by-case basis, looking at the legal and factual position in each individual case. Specific assessment methodology will be developed by the DS4SSCC-DEP consortium and published on the DS4SSCC-DEP website.

Eligible countries:

- EU Member States including their outermost regions;
- The Overseas Countries and Territories (**OCTs**) linked to the MS;
- DEP Associated countries.[13]

[9] The project website can be accessed at <https://www.ds4sscc.eu>
[10] The Data Cooperation Canvas is accessible here < https://www.datacooperationcanvas.eu/>
[11] The Letter of Commitment template is available on the DS4SSCC-DEP website < https://www.ds4sscc.eu/cfp-one >
[12] The OCD template will be made available to pilots in due course at https://ds4sscc.eu website.
[13] *See* European Commission, List of Participating Countries in the Digital Europe Programme <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/digital/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_digital_en.pdf>

Moreover:

- Participation in any capacity (as beneficiary, affiliated entity, associated partner, subcontractor or recipient of financial support to third parties) is limited to entities established in eligible countries.
- Project activities (including subcontracted work) must take place in eligible countries. In addition, to be eligible, all participants from Digital Europe associated countries (except EEA countries) have to present an adequate guarantee approved by the country they are established in, to comply with the conditions set out in this Call for Pilots Manual.

In principle, the consortium can be led by any eligible partner. **However, it is preferred that the Lead Partner is an EU local administration.** If this is not the case, the Lead Partner must go through additional eligibility checks in terms of ownership control, solvency and state aid; that might also delay the start of the pilot and/or influence the pre-financing schedules. The grant agreement will be signed only with the Lead Partner that is responsible for the implementation. It is required that the consortium partners will sign a Consortium Agreement themselves.

Please note that an Applicant **cannot be awarded more than one (1) grant as Lead Partner** under this project framework. In case more applications from the same Lead Partner are shortlisted according to the rules for this call, only the one (1) best-ranked proposal will be retained in the list to be financed (i.e., public administrations or universities will be considered as ONE organisation represented by ONLY ONE legal person despite the functional independence of their departments or units). The participation of each organisation will be checked during the final ranking phase on the basis, among others, of the following information: national registration number (e.g., VAT, national code, social security, PIC etc.), name of the organisation and name of the legal representative.

2.3 Financial Framework

2.3.1. Co-Funding Model

The financial criteria for applicants involve a co-funding model. The total EU contribution for the DS4SSCC-DEP pilots is 15 300 000 euros, which is planned to be distributed to around 12 chosen pilot consortiums. On top of that, applicants are expected to bear at least 50% of the pilot costs, as direct co-financing. This means that for any pilot proposed, the grant will cover only up to half of the total expenses. Applicants must therefore demonstrate their capacity to provide the remaining 50% through their own resources.
This approach ensures shared investment and commitment from both the funding body (EC) and the applicants, aligning with the principles of partnership and joint responsibility. The model is designed to encourage meaningful participation and investment in the pilot, ensuring that the applicants are equally invested in the success and sustainability of their initiatives. It is crucial for applicants to clearly articulate their funding strategy and show their ability to meet these financial requirements in their application.

Co-financing (at least 50% of the budget) has to be a dedicated cost as indicated directly in the budget for the pilot and has to be auditable. This has to be documented following normal accounting practices. To be eligible, co-financing cannot include in-kind resources not explicitly

monetised in the pilot budget, and all activities must observe relevant regulations, including state-aid rules and risks of double funding. As normally, all costs need to be actual and incurred during the pilot period time frame.

2.3.2. Form of Grant, Maximum Grant Amount and Reimbursement Rate

Financial support is provided in the form of grants based on, and reimbursed against, actual costs incurred and submitted in interim and final reporting. Only indirect costs are calculated on the basis of a flat rate (7% – as per Digital Europe Programme rules).

The total EU funding available for the pilots is **15 300 000 euros**, while each pilot is planned to be funded with **1 000 000 to 1 500 000 euros** to share amongst the Pilot Consortium. If justified, this can also be less than 1 million euro. The funding should be balanced proportionally amongst the consortium members. According to the Cloud Data and TEF (DIGITAL-2@022-CLOUD-AI-03) Call, the maximum support for **one consortium member (across multiple consortia and awarded pilot projects) can be up to 1 000 000 euros**.[14]

The reimbursement rate is 50% of the total eligible costs. The maximum grant amount can NOT be exceeded, which means that all additional financing for the pilot will be the sole responsibility of the members of the pilot consortium.

2.3.3. Estimated Budget of the Pilots

The applications to the CfP must include a detailed estimated budget presented in Euros. Applicants established in countries outside the Euro zone must use the conversion rates published in the C series of the Official Journal of the European Union.[15]

Applicants should be aware that they fully carry the exchange rate risk (further details on currency exchange will be specified in the Grant Agreement). The budget estimate must be properly balanced: the two totals (income and expenditure) must be the same since the available income (the grant requested for the pilot and own co-financing) will have to finance the planned expenditure. Expenditure must include the estimated costs for the implementation of the pilot exclusively.

2.3.4. Eligibility of Costs

The eligible direct costs for the pilot need to be identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the pilot's performance and which can therefore be attributed to it directly.

[14] Digital Europe Programme Cloud Data and TEF (Digital-2@0022-CLOUD-AI-03) call is available here: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/digital/wp-call/2022/call-fiche_digital-2022-cloud-ai-03_en.pdf

[15] For the conversion rates, please refer to: https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/index.en.html

Eligible costs must meet the following criteria:

a) be incurred by the beneficiary during the duration of the pilot, except costs relating to final reports and audit certificates;
b) be indicated in the estimated overall budget of the action attached to the Grant Agreement;
c) be necessary for the implementation of the pilot which is the subject of the grant;
d) be identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is/are established and according to the usual cost-accounting practices of the beneficiary;
e) comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
f) be reasonable, justified and comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

Other considerations for eligible funding:

- Value-added tax (**VAT**) is considered as eligible where it is not recoverable under the applicable national VAT legislation and is paid by a beneficiary other than a non-taxable person as defined in Article 13(1) of Council Directive 2006/112/EC13 of 28 November 2006 on the common system of value added tax.
- The successful applicant(s) must take care to avoid any unnecessary or unnecessarily high expenditure.
- The beneficiary's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit a direct reconciliation of the costs and revenue declared in respect of the pilot with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.
- Documentation justifying costs must be kept by the recipient for five years following the closure of the European data space for smart communities project.

According to the DEP rules, the following categories of direct costs are considered eligible: Personnel, Subcontracting and Purchase Costs. Indirect Costs (7%) are also eligible (Table 2).

Table 2 – Eligible Pilot Costs

Cost Category	
A. Personnel Costs	
B. Subcontracting Costs	
C. Purchase Costs	C.1 Travel and Subsistence
	C.2 Equipment
	C.3 Other goods, works and services (e.g. consumables, dissemination, audit costs)
D. Indirect Costs (= 7% * (A + B + C.1 + C.2 + C.3))	
Eligible Costs (A + B + C + D)	

A. Personnel Costs – This category covers costs for personnel working under an employment contract for the beneficiary, including natural persons under direct contract, and personnel seconded to the beneficiary against payment. The personnel have to be assigned to the grant and their time working on the grant needs to be documented through a time recording system (e.g. timesheets), in order to claim the costs. The actual annual salary includes social security contributions, taxes and other mandatory costs linked to the remuneration.

B. Subcontracting Costs – This cost category covers subcontracts for the implementation of certain action tasks described in the pilot. To be eligible, the nature and estimated costs must be foreseen in the estimated budget. Subcontracting may only cover a limited and reasonable part of the pilot's action. Subcontracts must be awarded ensuring competitive selection procedures on a "best value for money" basis and avoiding potential conflicts of interest. Subcontracting may not cover tasks of the pilot such as pilot management and coordination. Subcontracting is not allowed between members of the consortium.

C. Purchase Costs – This category covers costs for goods, work, or services necessary to support the implementation of the pilot, and it is divided in three sub-categories:

c*1) Travel and Subsistence* covers all the pilot related travel costs during the duration of the pilot (e.g., to pilot meetings, events, etc.). Costs generally should be for travel and subsistence for personnel of the awarded organisation. However, travel and subsistence costs for experts participating in the pilot are eligible provided this is explicitly foreseen in the budget.
c2) Equipment covers depreciation costs or costs for renting or leasing equipment. Equipment is normally capitalised over its useful life, but only the portion of costs related to the pilot and for the duration of the pilot can be depreciated and is eligible. Costs should be calculated according to national/institutional accounting practices.
c3) Other goods, works and services covers any additional cost needed to implement the pilot (e.g. dissemination and communication activities, audit certificates, etc.).

D. Indirect costs – Those are costs that cannot be identified as specific costs directly linked to the pilot but are necessary to run, manage and administrate the beneficiary's organisation. They are limited to a flat rate of 7% of the total eligible direct costs for the pilot (Personnel Costs + Purchase Costs + Subcontracting costs). These can include the expenditure – such as heating, electricity or other forms of energy, water – necessary for the successful completion of the pilot. As indirect costs are a flat rate, no supporting evidence is needed to verify them.

Ineligible costs:

Costs are not eligible when they do not comply with the conditions set out above, in particular:
- costs related to return on capital;
- debt and debt service charges;
- provisions for future losses or debts;
- interest owed;
- doubtful debts;
- currency exchange losses;
- excessive or reckless expenditure;
- deductible VAT;
- costs incurred after the suspension of the pilot implementation.

The following costs are out of scope for the piloting activities:
- infrastructure costs;
- sub-grants or prizes;
- large research infrastructure.

2.3.5. Reporting

The Lead Partner of the pilot will be required to submit the interim and final reports on behalf of the consortium within 30 days following the end of the pilot period. The interim period's duration is pilot half-time in months (pilot duration in months divided by two).

The interim reporting package must include the following:

- The Technical Report with an explanation of the work carried out by the recipients and the use of resources;
- The Financial Report that contains the individual financial statement from each recipient detailing the eligible costs (actual costs for the direct costs and the flat rate of 7% for the indirect costs).

The final reporting package must include the following:

- The Technical Report with an explanation of the work carried out by the recipients and the use of resources;
- The Financial Report that contains the individual financial statement from each recipient detailing the eligible costs (actual costs for the direct costs and the flat rate of 7% for the indirect costs), verified by an independent auditor.

The pilot consortia must ensure to follow contractual obligations under Articles 12 (conflict of interest), 13 (confidentiality and security), 14 (ethics), 17.2 (visibility), 18 (specific rules for carrying out action), 19 (information) and 20 (record-keeping). For further details, see the Annotated Grant Agreement[16].

2.3.6. Payment Procedures

Payment of the grant will be made up to three instalments, as follows:

1. **A pre-financing of 50%** of the grant within 30 calendar days from the entry into force of the Grant Agreement. The pre-financing aims to provide the beneficiaries with a float.
2. **Reimbursement of 50% of eligible costs during the reporting period 1**, if the interim evaluation assessment has been satisfactory, within 30 calendar days. If this is smaller than ⅓ of the total grant, no additional payment is made; the total pre-financing during the interim stage cannot exceed ⅔ of the grant funding.
3. **The remaining balance of 50% of eligible costs** within 30 calendar days from approving the technical report and financial statement.

The financing remains the property of the granting organisation (OASC) until the payment of the balance. In the case of any risk related to co-financing (50%) being not actual during the grant awarding and/or any reporting stage(s), the consortium receives no pre-financing but gets reimbursed according to actual costs incurred at the end of the pilot, being certified by an external auditor.

2.3.7. Certificate on Financial Statement

In case of award, the granting organisation (OASC), the EC, the European Anti-Fraud Office (**OLAF**) and the European Court of Auditor (**ECA**) have the right to run checks and audits on any aspect

[16] *See* European Commission, Annotated Grant Agreement <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf>

relating to the grant, as required by Article 15 of the Grant Agreement signed by the European data space for smart communities Consortium with the European Commission.[17]

The awarded organisations must provide a Certificate on Financial Statements (**CFS**) with their final report, carried out by an external auditor. The CFS's aim is to enable the granting organisation (OASC), the EC, the OLAF and the ECA to check whether costs declared in the financial statements are eligible. The costs for producing the CFS are eligible and go under the cost category C3 'Other goods, works and services'. It is recommended that each applicant includes the CFS costs in the budget estimated for the pilot.

2.4 Business and Organisational Framework

The overall aim of a European-wide data space for smart communities is to leverage trustworthy use and sharing of data across sectors to address local challenges, such as waste or traffic management, deliver better and more proactive services to citizens and reach the European Green Deal objectives[18]. While the vision and ambition is clear, it is crucial that the DS4SSCC-DEP project, alongside with the pilots, will be able to validate and demonstrate also the business and societal value created through upcoming dataspace deployments (see also Section 5 for Monitoring and Assessment).

As cities are cross-domain and cross-sectoral by definition, smart city solutions are in a great position to validate the feasibility and sustainability of collaborative data sharing and service provision. In order to ensure that cities embrace the concept of data spaces and start moving towards local and furthermore, European federated data spaces, local stakeholders need to define clearly the business rationale and organisational principles for such cooperation. Furthermore, as data spaces go through various lifecycle stages,[19] defining and iterating on its purpose, business and governance models will be essential. For that matter, **the CfP applicants will need to elaborate on their business case and other organisational aspects for data sharing**. During the Pilot Support phase, awarded pilots will also receive expert support to further iterate on their business plan and progress towards intended outcomes. As the key objective of the pilots is to validate the DS4SSCC blueprint and iterate on the development of the data space, it is clear that pilots cannot be required to demonstrate business and societal value immediately. However, in order to test data space's capacity to deliver on that promise, business and organisational considerations, alongside technical, should remain central in pilot implementations.

As per the Business Model Development building block[20] described by the DSSC, it is important to distinguish between the business models of various layers. In that regard, awarded pilots will need to focus on the business model development at least on the use case level, whereas the

[17] As per the Annotated Grant Agreement (available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf)
"beneficiaries must also ensure that the bodies mentioned in Article 25 (e.g. granting authority, the European Court of Auditors (ECA), the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)) have the right to carry out checks, reviews, audits and investigations on the recipients, and in particular to audit the payments received. If access is denied by the recipient, the costs will be rejected."
[18] *See* European Commission on Smart Cities and Communities < https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/smart-cities-and-communities>
[19] Data Spaces Support Centre, 4 Evolution of data space initiatives < https://dssc.eu/space/BVE/357073784/4++Evolution+of+data+space+initiatives>
[20] Data Spaces Support Centre, Business Model Development <https://dssc.eu/space/BVE/357074186/Business+Model+Development>

DS4SSCC-DEP project will test and validate the business model on the overall common European data space level.

The DSSC has also described various business case patterns (which are not necessarily mutually exclusive) to illustrate the varying purposes of establishing a data space.[21]

Table 3 – Business-case patterns of data spaces (adapted from DSSC's Starter Kit)

Business-case pattern	Description
A. Cost Sharing	Data space participants share their data to meet shared requirements (e.g., compliance, process efficiency, transparency). Every member saves money and time by sharing the burden.
B. Joint Innovation	Customer innovation can only be realised by ecosystem members working together. No single ecosystem member has all the necessary data.
C. Combined Forces	Ecosystem members team up to prevent a limited number of dominant market players from emerging. No single ecosystem member has the necessary resources and commitment to do this alone.
D. Shared Marketplace	Ecosystem members team up to provide quality-assured, easy access to data of a domain of common interest (open data, business partner data, etc.). Transaction costs go down for all ecosystem members
E. Greater Common Good	Public and private sectors share data for a greater common, societal goal (e.g., climate protection).

Whereas it could be expected that the first four business-case patterns are more prevalent in industry-specific data space, smart cities data spaces will surely also strive towards Greater Common Good in order to ensure and increase societal wellbeing. This will also influence the business model and governance mechanisms of specific data space initiatives.

The Multi-stakeholder governance scheme,[22] developed during the DS4SSCC preparatory stage, defined also the following organisational principles, which the pilots should follow:

- The sharing and re(use) of data via DS4SSCC should create tangible societal value and public benefits on top of economic value. Local authorities, communities, and citizens should be the main beneficiaries of data sharing and reuse in the context of DS4SSCC.
- The purpose of data sharing and reuse should align with the European Green Deal objectives and with the European data strategy, including on data and technological sovereignty.
- The data space should level the playing field in terms of data sharing and reuse between different types of stakeholders.
- The added value should be retained in the data ecosystem and surplus either reinvested or returned to the ecosystem in other forms.

[21] Data Spaces Support Centre, 3 Business:Value and Models <https://dssc.eu/space/SK/35520539/3+Business%3A+Value+and+Models>

[22] Deliverable 2.2 Multi-Stakeholder Governance Scheme, DS4SSCC preparatory action <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/63718ba2d90d0263d7fc1857/t/651ea670a884c256d84f4864/1696507511589/DS4SSCC_D2.2+Multi-stakeholder+governance+scheme.docx.pdf and https://datacooperationcanvas.eu/>

- The purpose of data sharing and reuse should be clearly explained for each use-case and demonstrate this societal value/public benefit.
- The governance and infrastructure of DS4SSCC should abide by the principles of technological and data sovereignty[23] with particular attention to vendor lock-ins.
- Data space participants should be represented in Governance Bodies and be able to contribute to the decision-making processes. This includes participation of the main beneficiaries: local governments, communities and citizens.

The preparatory action introduced the **Data Cooperation Canvas**[24] to help stakeholders engaged in a particular data space use case define its purpose, clearly identify the needs for data sharing, as well as lay out the different components (technical, governance, business models, implementation) that are required to ensure the success of the cooperation. The CfP applicants are encouraged to acquaint themselves with the Canvas, and use it to clarify its business and organisational aspects. The Data Cooperation Canvas will be further used in the Pilot Support phase to crystallise the pre-conditions for succeeding the pilots from the business perspective.

2.5 Technical Framework

Technically speaking, the European data space for smart communities aims at providing a common set of essential tools, services, support and required documentation to support the federation of all data spaces and digital platforms at local, regional or national level which would be onboarded into the European data space, through Universal Trust Registry. The pilots to be awarded through the CfP will be onboarded to the European data space either by evolving their existing digital platforms or engaging their emerging data spaces. Therefore, the applying pilots must be at a certain degree of digitization to be eligible. Figure 2 below shows a high-level overview of how the existing platforms or data spaces from different pilots must become connected to the European data space for smart communities.

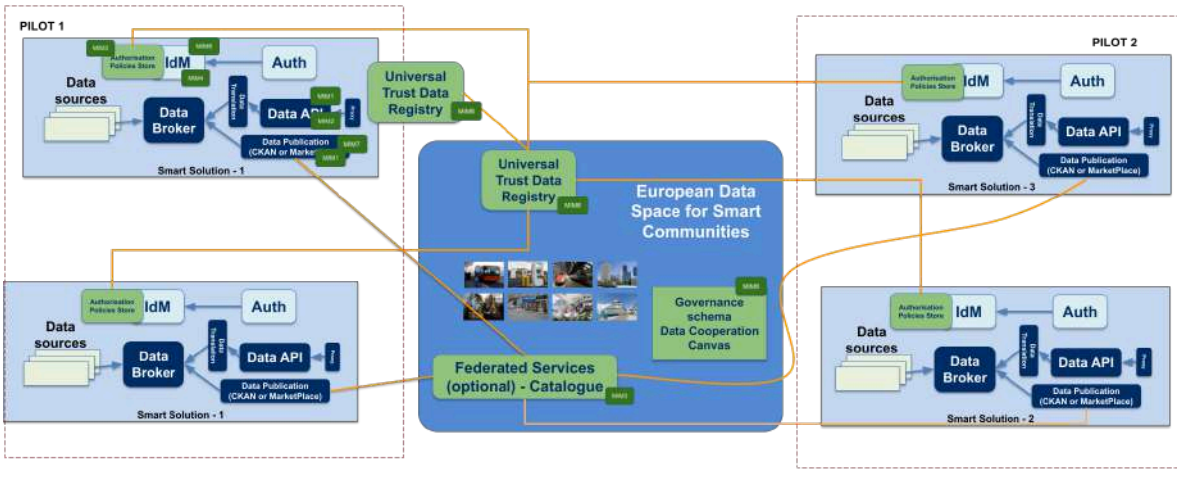

Figure 2 – Connecting Pilots to the European Data Space for Smart Communities

[23] *See* European Parliament Research Service, Digital Sovereignty for Europe < https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/651992/EPRS_BRI(2020)651992_EN.pdf>

[24] Deliverable 2.2 Multi-Stakeholder Governance Scheme, DS4SSCC preparatory action <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/63718ba2d90d0263d7fc1857/t/651ea670a884c256d84f4864/1696507511589/DS4SSCC_D2.2+Multi-stakeholder+governance+scheme.docx.pdf and https://datacooperationcanvas.eu/>

In an ideal scenario for a data space, different ecosystems will share different kinds of data and services using different formats and protocols. So, it is important to have a standardised interoperability with APIs and Data models. Data spaces should provide a solid framework for an efficient sharing of data amongst participants, supporting full decoupling of data providers and consumers. This requires the adoption of a "common lingua" that every participant uses, materialised in the adoption of common APIs for the data exchange, and the definition of common data models. Common mechanisms for interoperability, traceability of data transactions and data provenance are also required.

Most importantly, we expect the participants to check the DS4SSCC's Reference Architecture[25] to assess the type of scenario we are looking for. In addition, we expect that the proposals to:

1. **Describe the current digital platform used in their community.** The pilot must show a high level of technological maturity, that is, having at least a data platform or digital twin in place and providing digital and data services in the city or community. Emerging data space is also welcome. CfP applicants are encouraged to provide a public reference (URL link) to the platform (or in case a public reference is not available, screenshots to the platform's front-end).
2. **Include the mapping of the data spaces building blocks** (see Catalogue of Specifications[26]) into the platform architecture. This catalogue is following the proposed structure by the DSSC.
3. **Indicate which standards and implementations are they using for each mapped building block**; at least standard Data Models, Data Format and APIs used have to be interoperable. It is recommended to follow the standards proposed in the Reference Architecture or provide a plan to evolve and solve interoperability with the standards. The building blocks can be implemented from different implementers, such as FIWARE[27] and Simpl framework[28], but other building blocks implementations based on open standards can be also considered.
4. **Explain how they plan to incorporate the required components described in the architecture** (Authorization Policies Store, integration with Universal Trust Data Registry and creation of digital services and data offers) to evolve their platform and be engaged in a data space. In order to integrate the pilots into the European Data Space for Sustainable Cities and Communities, those pilots need to describe, on a technical level, how they will provide the following interoperability:

    a. **Authorization Policies Store** - Pilots should deploy an Access Control Management (ACM) component that details which users are allowed to engage with the data space. This component is called an Authorization Policies Store and is provided on the pilots' side. This may be (an extension of) their own ACM

[25] Deliverable 3.2 Architecture Model, DS4SSCC preparatory action <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/63718ba2d90d0263d7fc1857/t/651ec20acfcf626ce73d97df/1696514592952/DS4SSCC_D3.2_Architecture+Model.pdf>
[26] Deliverable 3.1.Catalogue of Specifications, DS4SSCC preparatory action <https://drive.google.com/file/d/174_g8dAM3yxRiyTFUSvxvE4zEgYiAlaz/view>
[27] See FIWARE Smart Cities Reference Architecture <https://www.fiware.org/wp-content/uploads/FIWARE_SmartCities_ReferenceArchitecture.png>
[28] For more information on the SIMPL framework < https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/simpl>

implementations, such as Active Directory, LDAP, OpenID, OAuth2, etc, but they must follow ABAC[29] and RBAC[30] access controls.

b. **Universal Trust Data Registry** - Pilots should engage in discussion on how their proper Identity Management and ACM components can integrate with the Universal Trust Data Registry, which relies on W3C Verifiable Credentials[31], to access the data space. Again, there are no restrictions on technologies to be used, but an agreement must be in place.

c. **Description of digital services and data offers into the Federated Catalogue** - Pilots should describe a data and services offering and their cost, including technical requirements and available Service Level Agreements (SLA's) on the access, quality and availability of that data. The available data must be described in the Catalogue following DCAT specifications.[32]

5. **Include a detailed implementation plan;** the pilots should provide the timeline, development process approach and plan of technologies to be used for the deployment of the data space, integration to the EU data space for smart communities and implementation of a use case.
6. **Describe the technical infrastructure** (cloud, hardware) where the pilot will be deployed (own or from third parties);
7. **List the types of datasets that will be considered**; the pilots should provide the list of models and formats they plan to use in the validation use case, according to the datasets involved.
8. **Indicate the roles of the participants in the data space:**[33] service/data providers, service/data users, service/data intermediaries, etc. The participants of the data space can be either pilot partners and other stakeholders in their ecosystem. The data space can be wider than the pilot itself.
9. **Describe the use case which will be used for validation of the blueprint**. The pilot must deploy and validate the building blocks and components referred to in the data space blueprint. But it also has to demonstrate that the deployed data space works as expected for sharing data amongst the participants. Thus, the pilot must also provide a use case on top of the deployed data space. The use case is the service or application that will be developed to show the data and service sharing seamlessly amongst the participants in the data space or with other data spaces. Both sites in piloting consortia do not necessarily have to share data cross-border (though it's desirable), but they need to show the services and data sharing across domains (within each country). Therefore, data from both domains must be used to create value out of the sharing.
10. **Indicate which Minimal Interoperable Mechanisms (MIMs) Plus**[34] they will put in place to make its data and services interoperable. While compliance with all MIMs is highly

[29] For more information on Attributed-Based Access Control <https://www.openpolicyagent.org/docs/latest/comparison-to-other-systems/#attribute-based-access-control-abac>
[30] For more information on Role-Based Access Control < https://www.openpolicyagent.org/docs/latest/comparison-to-other-systems/#role-based-access-control-rbac>
[31] Verifiable Credential Data Model is available at < https://www.w3.org/TR/vc-data-model/>
[32] The Data Catalog Vocabulary is accessible at < https://www.w3.org/TR/vocab-dcat-3/>
[33] Relevant roles for data spaces have been described in the Code of Conduct as part of the DS4SSCC blueprint <https://inventory.ds4sscc.eu/multi-stakeholder-governance/code-of-conduct>.
[34] The Minimum Interoperable Mechanisms Plus can be accessed at < https://living-in.eu/group/7/commitments/mims-plus-version-6-final >

recommended, the proposals and pilot implementations must comply with at least the following MIMs:

- MIM1 - Context Information (Context Information Management).
- MIM2 - Data Models (Shared Data Models).
- MIM6 - Security (Security Management).

DS4SSCC-DEP recommends pilots to follow the standards and technologies included in the data space blueprint in order to foster the interoperability and federation of data spaces. If the pilot proposed platform is not following any of the standard recommendations mentioned in the Reference Architecture[35], then one of the following has to be provided:

1. An intention to implement the wrapper or a component to make the data and API interoperable or the intention to migrate to one of the proposed standards.
2. Roadmap of the implementation or migration.

Based on the set of KPIs used to monitor and assess the pilots, there are also minimal values required to validate the principles of the data space (e.g., to share data between two participants; at least two data providers are needed in each pilot; at least one service needs to be provided based on the shared data; at least one data user is needed in each pilot) (for more details, see Section 5 for Monitoring and Assessment).

To visualise and plan your pilot effectively through mapping data collaborations and self-assessing the technological maturity level in local administrations and its entities, we recommend the following tools:

Data Cooperation Canvas[36] helps to describe existing and potential data collaborations for pilots. It is also an integral component designed as part of the preparatory action and is freely available for use.

LORDIMAS[37] (a digital maturity assessment tool for local and regional authorities in Europes) to self-assess technological maturity level. For example, LORDIMAS stages “Digitally Optimised” or “Digitally Native” are expected from all participating public local administrations.

While these are the tools recommended to be used in the application phase, they will be used as part of the onboarding during the pilot execution phase.

Pilots should try to leverage on the available assets provided by the DS4SSCC preparatory action[38] and DSSC.[39] They are further encouraged during the implementation phase to provide feedback

[35] Project Deliverable 3.2. Architecture Model <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/63718ba2d90d0263d7fc1857/t/651ec20acfcf626ce73d97df/1696514592952/DS4SSCC_D3.2_Architecture+Model.pdf>
[36] The Data Cooperation Canvas is accessible here < https://www.datacooperationcanvas.eu/>
[37] LORDIMAS tool is accessible at <https://gis-portal.espon.eu/arcgis/apps/experiencebuilder/experience/?id=975e0dd3bcf84aa9810f0f5b5f7b9b65&page=page_18&views=view_104>
[38] The DS4SSCC inventory is accessible at < https://inventory.ds4sscc.eu/>
[39] The Data Spaces Support Centre website is available here < https://dssc.eu>

about how to improve these assets and make them more valuable. The overall aim for the European data space for smart communities is to federate all the existing and upcoming data spaces at local, regional, national or European level. In order to work towards an interoperable federation, the pilots should comply with the DS4SSCC blueprint.

2.6 Ethical Framework

2.6.1. Ethical Considerations

The premise for data spaces is that data sharing (and its underlying infrastructure) will be based on principles of data sovereignty and trustworthiness. Hence, it is paramount that the actual implementations of data sharing will also follow ethical data practices. However, it is important to keep in mind that ethics is a process that cannot provide straightforward checklists for compliance. Instead, ethical guidelines are often based on shared principles that provide recommendations for analysing data practices and its intended purpose. For the ethics within the dataspaces, DS4SSCC-DEP project works with the concept of Principlism to assess possible ethical constraints, taking into account the following principles:

- respect for persons and autonomy;
- justice;
- non-maleficence and beneficence;
- dignity;
- responsibility and accountability.

The DS4SSCC-DEP project uses different ethical frameworks and guidelines such as, ALTAI (AI HLEG's trustworthy AI assessment list), FRAIA and ISO/IEC standards on ethical and societal concerns.[40] Based on the various frameworks, the DS4SSCC-DEP project has established a specific ethical assessment framework and monitoring to be used in the CfP process. Further, DS4SSCC-DEP established an Ethics Board that consists of both project partners and external experts, and is involved in the evaluation of the CfP proposals and pilot implementations. Ethical aspects will be further included in the Pilot Support activities as part of training and mentorship.

The DS4SSCC-DEP project, including the piloting programme, follows the **'ethics and data protection by design'** approach for the CfP and establishes various checkpoints with the pilot consortias to create attention to ethical and legal challenges, and evaluate to what extent a consortium is prepared to deal with these challenges. The checkpoints are the following:

- **Pre-proposal submission**: DS4SSCC-DEP project partners will provide coaching sessions to build applicants' capacities in identifying ethical and legal challenges and mitigating these upfront. The applicants will also need to complete **the Ethics and Data Protection Self-Assessment** (available on the DS4SSCC-DEP website)[41] and submit this together with the main application document.

[40] Note that both the DS4SSCC-DEP project consortium as well as the pilot consortiums must ensure that their contractual obligations under Article 12 (conflict of interest), and Article 14 (ethics) among others are followed. See: Annotated Grant Agreement
https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf
[41] The Ethics and Data Protection Self-Assessment can be accessed here <https://www.ds4sscc.eu/cfp-one>.

- **During the evaluation of applications**: The Ethics Board will compare ethical self-assessment with proposed work package structure, presented in the application (see also Evaluation Process overview).
- **At the start of pilot projects:** representatives from the Ethics Board will contact the pilot consortium to discuss ethical needs and provide additional one-on-one sessions to mitigate any concerns. For example, they may ask to allocate more time or resources to an ethical aspect that requires attention.

The DS4SSCC-DEP consortium is responsible for the overall integration of the data spaces, the CfP procedure and evaluation. However, the actual work carried out in the pilots, consisting of identifying and mitigating ethical and legal challenges, is beyond the responsibility and control of the project consortium.

There is a body of literature available for ethical considerations, it's worthwhile to remind, that ethics is a process that cannot provide straightforward checklists for compliance. Furthermore, while it's useful to define common principles, these alone cannot guarantee trustworthy or ethical practices.[42] It is therefore recommended (and in some cases required)[43] that dataspace implementations will set-up mechanisms for oversight, as well as collaborate with a broader dataspace community of experts to resolve any ethical issues upfront. Afterall, fair, compliant, and trustworthy access to, control over and (re)use of data can only be reached by interdisciplinary efforts and involvement of a broad community of experts and stakeholders.

2.6.2. Compliance with Relevant Legislation

While ethics go beyond compliance with existing regulation, it is worthwhile to point out that the DS4SSCC-DEP project, including the pilots, need to take all required steps to guarantee compliance with the provisions of the relevant EU regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), ePrivacy Directive, Data Governance Act (DGA), Data Act (DA), AI Act and others. Applicants of the CfP are highly recommended to review the list of relevant legislative instruments from the Code of Conduct developed by the DS4SSCC preparatory action.[44]

Applicants shall comply with applicable data protection legislation including but not limited to the GDPR and any national implementing laws, regulations, and secondary legislation, in each case as amended, supplemented or replaced from time to time. The GDPR guarantees that the processing of data is carried out in compliance with the fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the dignity of the data subject with particular reference to confidentiality, personal identity, and the right to data protection.

While it is challenging to assess upfront how the CfP applicants shall comply with the relevant legislation, the DS4SSCC-DEP consortium proposes to evaluate GDPR-readiness using the Synchronicity method to evaluate GDPR-readiness. This framework helps to evaluate the consortium's knowledge and access to required GDPR knowledge and tools.

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[42] See e.g., Mittelstadt 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s42256-019-0114-4>.

[43] Note that according to the EU's AI Act which shall be effective during 2025, data used to build the services and solutions on the platform should be traceable to its origin and should be capable of providing full transparency, if requested.

[44] The inventory from DS4SSCC preparatory action can be accessed at< https://inventory.ds4sscc.eu/multi-stakeholder-governance/code-of-conduct>

2.6.3. Complaints and Appeals

While the DS4SSCC-DEP consortium is responsible for evaluating the proposals and in later stages pilots' performance, approved pilot project consortia are responsible for the complaints and appeals stemming from the implementation of their data spaces. We encourage all affected stakeholders to directly contact the pilot consortia for any complaints. If necessary, the DS4SSCC-DEP consortia will remain available for support through support@ds4sscc.eu email address. Complaints regarding ethical issues will be handed over to the Ethical Board for discussion and proposing further action steps.

2.6.4. Confidentiality, usage of applicants' data and privacy notice

The processing of data by DS4SSCC-DEP Consortium adheres to GDPR and its Article 5 principles, ensuring lawfulness, correctness, and confidentiality. Personal data will be processed by the DS4SSCC-DEP Consortia members responsible for the evaluation process and selection of the pilots. The applicant warrants and represents that in providing personal data in connection with the proposal, the data subjects have consented to the provision of their personal data and the processing of it by the designated DS4SSCC-DEP Consortium members, and that the organisation provides the personal data in accordance with applicable law. Personal data (e.g., email addresses) can be also used for collecting feedback from applicants.

Public sharing of data encompasses, among other things, the disclosure of CfP outcome to the DS4SSCC-DEP project's web page. This includes aggregated level statistics such as the number of applicants, applicants per country, the sectors covered. Information on each funded activity, including participant information and abstracts of the activity proposal, may be made available for publication purposes as currently expected:

- Details to be made publicly available before the end of the pilot: pilot title, names of the Lead Partner and other beneficiaries, short description (as provided by the applicant in the application template).
- Details to be made publicly available after pilot completion: pilot title, names of the Lead Partner and other beneficiaries, awarded funding, updated short pilot description and main pilot results (as provided in the Final Report).

The evaluation and selection of applications will be performed under the appropriate ethical conduct and will respect the confidentiality of the information received[45]. The DS4SSCC-DEP consortium will treat any proposal, related information and documents confidentially. Personal data will be processed in accordance with our Privacy Statement[46] (confirmed by the Ethics Board of the DS4SSCC-DEP project), or as otherwise indicated throughout the proposal form (e.g., applicants, pilot title, summary description etc.).

The DS4SSCC-DEP Consortium members will not be able to discuss in detail or contribute directly to the development of the pilot proposal. Selected Evaluation Committee members evaluating the

[45] Note that both the DS4SSCC-DEP project consortium as well as the pilot consortiums must ensure that their contractual obligations under Article 13 (confidentiality and security) among others are followed. See: Annotated Grant Agreement https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf

[46] The updated version of the Privacy Statement of the Call for Pilots can be found at < https://www.ds4sscc.eu/privacy-statement>

applications are also obliged to sign Non-Disclosure Agreement and the Conflict of Interest Statement provided by the Ethics Board.

2.6.5. Dissemination of results and Intellectual Property

By default, DS4SSCC-DEP follows the principle of openness to also foster reusability and accelerate research and development of data spaces around Europe, while remaining closed to safeguard privacy and intellectual property. Consequently, our default approach is open source also for the piloting results. For specific rights and obligations concerning Intellectual Property Rights of the use and dissemination of results generated by pilot teams through funding obtained via the CfP, the DS4SSCC-DEP project will refer to the Grant Agreements signed with the pilots.

Regarding the dissemination and use of results funded by the CfP, recipients must credit the DS4SSCC-DEP project with proper citation and the display of the DS4SSCC-DEP logo and EU flag (emblem).[47] This includes consistent use of the EU flag and citation throughout the pilot, stating: "*This project has received co-funding from the European Union's Digital Europe programme under grant agreement No. 101123342*".

[47] See further details from Annotated Grant Agreement under Article 17.2 (visibility) https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf and https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-05/eu-emblem-rules_en.pdf

3 Call for Pilots Process & Evaluation

This chapter describes the organisational aspects of the Call for Pilots process. Furthermore, it provides an overview of the evaluation process, criteria and scoring mechanism, as well as opportunities to stay informed and receive support during the application process.

3.1 Call for Pilots Timeline

The submission process is organised in three rounds and each application period is expected to be open for three months. See detailed information about the submission deadlines, evaluation process and implementation in the following table.

Table 4 – Expected Timeline of the Application and Piloting Process

Submission round	1st round	2nd round	3rd round
Submission Period	June 1st 9:00 AM CET - August 31st 23.59 CET 2024 (3 months)	September – November 2024 (3 months)	December 2024 – February 2025 (3 months)
Evaluation Period	September 2024	December 2024	March 2025
Notification	October 2024	January 2025	April 2025
Number of Selected Pilots[48]	*1-2*	*4-6*	*4-(adjusted)*
Feedback to pilot teams and re-submission of re-scoped proposal	October 2024	January 2025	April 2025
Onboarding workshop	November 2024	February 2025	May 2025
Implementation Period	November 2024 – October 2025/April 2026 (12-18 months)	March 2025 – February/August 2026 (12-18 months)	May 2025 – April/August 2026 (12-16 months)

In the first application round, 1-2 pilots will be selected, followed by two subsequent rounds accommodating 4-6 pilots each. Please note that resubmission of pilot applications is permitted for the following submission rounds.

3.2 Documents for Submission

To apply for the pilot, applicants have to submit all the necessary information and documentation to assess the content of the pilot proposals and their compliance according to eligibility and ethics (including GDPR compliance). The following documentation is required from the applicants (all templates are available on the DS4SSCC-DEP project website):[49]

[48] Number of funded pilots may vary based on the submitted proposals quantity and quality.
[49] The templates can be found at < https://www.ds4sscc.eu/cfp-one>

1. Application Form (in PDF)
2. Pilot Budget including resource plan (in Excel)
3. Letters of Commitment (Signed PDFs)
4. Ethics and Data Protection Self-Assessment (Excel)

3.3 Where to Apply and How

Full Application template and supporting documentation (written in English) must be submitted via email (apply@ds4sscc.eu)[50] before the specified deadline (according to the CfP timeline published on the project website).[51] The application must be filled in using the predefined templates provided by the DS4SSCC-DEP project consortium.

All the documents must be uploaded in PDF format, except the budget which must remain in Excel format (.xlsx). Each pilot consortium should submit a maximum of one (1) proposal for each submission round. Additionally, one organisation can apply only once as a consortium Lead Partner under each CfP round. No limitation applies to the participation of the same organisation at the partner level.

The proposal must be submitted by the consortium member acting as the Lead Partner who is also responsible for completing all administrative information and checking all documents. After submitting the documents, a confirmation letter will be sent to applicants confirming that the application was received and stating the time of submission.

3.4 Applicants Support

Applicants are encouraged to prepare for the CfP rounds by familiarising themselves with the following:

- the DS4SSCC preparatory action and the Data Space Blueprint and have started to think about the pilot activities framed with respect to the aim of the Call for Pilots;
- available information about the CfP published on the project webpage;
- priority areas of the European Green Deal[52] and New European Bauhaus initiative[53] and defined at least two relevant sectors central in your pilot proposal;
- the Pilots Support[54] provided during the piloting – mentoring and training (including needed budget allocation), monitoring and evaluation taking place during the execution phase; and
- information sessions & Stakeholder Forum meetings and/or watching the recordings[55] to learn more about how to shape their proposal.

To ensure that all necessary steps for successful application submission have been followed, applicants are recommended to run through the following pre-submission checklist (Table 5).

[50] The DS4SSCC-DEP consortium may decide to use online forms for submitting applications in the consecutive rounds. Specific instructions for submitting applications will be provided before the launch of each submission round on the DS4SSCC-DEP website and the F&T portal.
[51] The updated timeline is available at < https://www.ds4sscc.eu/cfp-one>
[52] For more information on the European Green Deal, <https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en>
[53] To learn more about the New European Bauhaus initiative visit <https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en>
[54] Information on the pilots support will be accessible here <https://www.ds4sscc.eu/pilots-support>
[55] The recordings of the sessions are available here < https://www.youtube.com/@ds4sscc/videos>

Table 5 – Checklist before Submission

	Activity	Yes/No
#1	You have prepared all documents for the submission: Application Form, Budget Sheet, Letters of Commitment, Ethics and Data Protection Self-assessment.	
#2	Your documents are in the right format (PDF & Excel) and answers within the character limits	
#3	Your consortium has at least two local or regional public administrations from different EU Member States or DEP Associated countries on board	
€4	All partners of the pilots are from the EU or DEP Associated countries, and the activity of the pilot will take place in the eligible countries	
#5	You have described a cross-sectorial use case in the Application Form	
#6	Your consortium does not request more than 1.5 Million Euros and will cover at least 50% of the pilot budget	
#7	Your data space pilot complies with the minimal technical requirements	
#8	Your data space pilot complies with relevant regulations, such as GDPR, DGA etc	

Applicants are further recommended to check their applications against the following Eligibility Check Grid (see Table 6), which will be also used by the Evaluation Team during pre-screening of received applications. Only eligible applications will be passed for expert evaluation.

Table 6 – Eligibility Check Grid (legal, financial, technical, ethical)

	Eligibility criterion	How it's demonstrated	How it's assessed
General	All required documents have been submitted in the right format (PDF & Excel).	Application Form, Pilot Budget, Letters of Commitment, Ethics and Data Protection Self-Assessment	pass/fail
	All questions have been answered (within the character limits).	Application Form, Pilot Budget, Ethics and Data Protection Self-Assessment	pass/fail
Legal	Pilot consortium consists of at least two local or regional public administrations from different eligible countries. They contribute to the budget and provide a Letter of Commitment.	Application Form + Letters of Commitment	pass/fail
	All entities in the consortium are subject to restrictions due to security reasons. Entities must not be controlled by an ineligible country. If there is a risk for such case, entities will be offered an opportunity to provide a guarantee. See Legal Framework in the Call for Pilots Manual for more details.	OCD must be self-declared at proposal time in the Application Form.	pass/fail

	The pilot consortium does not include any member(s) of the DS4SSCC-DEP Consortium.	Application Form	pass/fail
Financial	Pilot consortia cover at least 50% of the pilot budget as co-financing. The co-financing are dedicated costs, indicated directly in the budget for the pilot and are auditable (in kind not allowed).	Applicants demonstrate their capacity to provide at least 50% co-financing in an added budget table and with the Letter of Commitment(s)	pass/fail
	Support requested is not higher than 1.5 million euros.	Pilot Budget and Resource Plan	pass/fail
	Support requested is not more than 1 million per entity.	Pilot Budget (Note that if a partner participates in multiple applications, the Evaluation Team will check budget distribution across respective applications that have received most score points and would otherwise be awarded. This step will ensure that the grant limit per entity will not be exceeded.)	pass/fail
	Double funding of activities not allowed (e.g., other EU projects).	Application Form	pass/fail
	Duration of the pilot falls into the expected duration criteria specified in the Call for Pilots Manual.	Application Form	pass/fail
Technical	Cross-sectorial: At least two different sectors share the data to provide a local public service (in each participating local administration).	Application Form	pass/fail
	Digitalisation level: Data platform, digital twin or emerging data space already in place in the city/community.	Application Form	pass/fail
	Compliance with MIMs: the applicant is compliant at least with MIM1 - Context Information (Context Information Management), MIM2 - Data Models (Shared Data Models), and MIM6 - Security (Security Management)	Application Form	pass/fail
	The applicant has declared that they have mapped Data Spaces Building Blocks into the platform architecture and specified used standards and implementations recommended in the Reference Architecture	Application Form	pass/fail
Ethical	Ethics and Data Protection Self-Assessment completed and submitted.	Application Form Ethics and Data Protection Self-Assessment	pass/fail

For any questions regarding the Call for Pilots, we recommend the applicants to explore the FAQ page made available on the website.[56] This page is continuously updated based on the questions asked either through email or online events (e.g., Stakeholder Forum meetings, Open Info sessions).

In case of any additional questions or concerns, applicants can directly contact the DS4SSCC-DEP team through helpdesk email (support@ds4sscc.eu) that is set up to provide support both for applicants and pilot project consortia members. Note that all questions that can be answered will be also published on the FAQ page.

3.5 Evaluation Framework and Road to the Implementation Stage

The applications received through the Call for Pilots will go through a thorough review process, ensuring compliance with the set requirements (see previous section for Call for Pilots Framework) and quality assurance.

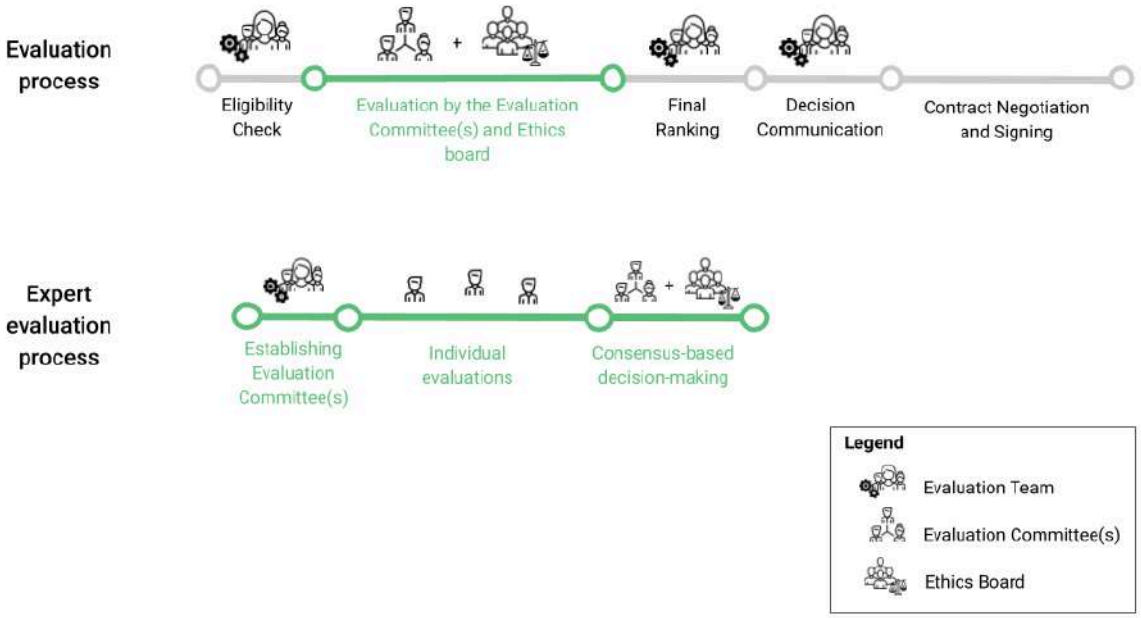

Figure 3 – Evaluation Process Overview

After each CfP submission period, submitted proposals will go through the evaluation process:

#1 Eligibility check

At first, the Evaluation Team, consisting of DS4SSCC-DEP project representatives, will perform a pre-screening of applications for their eligibility using an **Eligibility Check Grid**. This step ensures that the evaluators only review applications that meet relevant criteria. The Eligibility Check Grid is

[56] The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page is available here < https://www.ds4sscc.eu/FAQ>.

based on various requirements set by the EC as well as minimum necessary conditions for the implementation of the pilot to test the data space blueprint established within the framework of the DS4SSCC preparatory action.

We assess in-time submissions, respecting character limits, the applicant's legal status and passing ethical checks, amongst others.

#2 Evaluation by the Evaluation Committee(s) and Ethics Board

Applications that have passed the eligibility check are matched with expert evaluators according to their fields of expertise. Each application will be reviewed by at least three experts. The assigned experts assess the proposals' using the predefined evaluation structure (see Table 7 Evaluation Criteria and Scoring Mechanism). This mechanism is based on the awarding criteria used in the Digital Europe Programme[57] and lies on three main criteria: Relevance, Implementation, Impact.

Individual evaluation

At first, applications are reviewed and scored by experts individually. The scores will be complemented with justification according to the provided template. In addition, selected members from the Ethics Board will review the applications and the complementary Ethics and Data Protection Self-assessments (available on the DS4SSCC-DEP website).[58]

Consensus group meeting

After the individual evaluation has been completed, all experts and Ethics Board representatives who assessed the applications in question will meet to discuss the individual evaluation reports and agree on comments and scores. That means that the evaluation follows the principle of consensus-based decision-making.

This process step will also help foster consistency across the evaluations. The consensus group discussion is facilitated by a moderator (Evaluation Team's representative), who seeks a consensus and ensures that proposals are evaluated in a fair manner and in line with the established criteria. The consensus group discussion results in an evaluation report including justifications of scores and dissenting views, if any. The report is signed by the experts and Ethics Board representative evaluating the proposal discussed, and the moderator.

#3 Final ranking and selecting the pilots

After receiving the results of the evaluation report, the Evaluation Team will put together the final ranking list. If necessary, the Evaluation Team might engage an additional external independent observer (e.g. from the EC staff) who can consider additional criteria, such as EU regional or domain. During this step in the process, the Evaluation Team checks all shortlisted proposals for meeting the financial and legal requirements, namely that a partner would not receive more than 1 000 000 euros across pilots that might be awarded, and that an entity would not be a Lead

[57] See Awarding Criteria at <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/digital/wp-call/2023/call-fiche_digital-2023-edih-04_en.pdf>

[58] The documentation is available here<https://www.ds4sscc.eu/cfp-one>

Partner in several pilots. Proposals with an equal final score will be ranked according to the scores they were given for criterion 'Relevance'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Impact'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Implementation'. In case of uncertainties, reviewers are invited to an online discussion for clarification. Based on the final ranking, the best pilot proposals will be selected for funding.

The evaluation period is estimated to take approximately four weeks after the CfP submission round deadline.

Table 7 – Application Evaluation Criteria and Scoring Mechanism

No	Criteria	Content Evaluated	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
1	Relevance	1.1. Alignment with the DEP objectives and other data space initiatives. 1.2. Contribution to long-term policy objectives, relevant policies and strategies, and synergies with activities at European, national and community level. 1.3 Alignment with the DS4SSCC blueprint.	3	5
2	Implementation	2.1. Maturity of the existing community platform, digital twin or emerging data space. 2.2. Soundness of the implementation plan, business case and efficient use of resources. 2.3. Capacity of the applicants, and when applicable the consortium as a whole, to carry out the proposed work, including co-funding source. 2.4. How the pilot aligns with ethical principles.	3	5
3	Impact	3.1. How the pilot will achieve the expected outcomes and deliverables referred to in the call for proposals and, where relevant, the plans to disseminate and communicate the pilot's achievements. 3.2. How the pilot will strengthen competitiveness and bring important benefits for society. 3.3. How the pilot addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects. 3.4 How the pilot will be contributing to the enrichment of the European data space for smart communities.	3	5
	Overall (pass) scores		10	15

Notes:
Each criterion is scored on a scale from 0 to 5, whereas half-point scores may be given (see Table 7 Scores and Explanations). The maximum number of points that can be obtained for each criterion is 5 points, with individual threshold per each criterion being accordingly 3/5, 3/5 and 3/5 points. The overall threshold for passing the evaluation is 10 points.

Scores refer to the following:
0 - The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
1 - Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
2 - Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
3 - Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
4 - Very Good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
5 - Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

#4 Decision Communication

All applicants will be notified of the score and result of their pilot proposal via email. A notification email will consist of an evaluation letter, brief feedback from the Evaluation Committee, and Ethics Board (if necessary) and a link to an anonymous feedback questionnaire (to gather feedback about the CfP process). More comprehensive feedback is not provided to ensure equal opportunities for applicants of all rounds as the resubmission of pilot proposals is permitted for the following submission rounds.

A reserve list will also be created from each application round in case the selected pilot proposal does not meet the requirements after additional financial and legal checks or when some negotiations reveal that a proposal cannot proceed to signing. We also guide applicants to the following calls for resubmission.

#5 Contract Negotiation and Signing

Before going into contract negotiations, the pilot teams will work with a mentor provided by the DS4SSCC-DEP project to make final improvements to the proposal based on the evaluation feedback. The iterated workplan for the pilot will become the basis for the grant agreement.

After passing through additional financial and legal checks, the pilot proposal team will be invited for the negotiation and Grant Agreement preparation with OASC. The Grant Agreement will set the frame for the grant and its terms and conditions, in particular concerning deliverables, reporting and payments.

The starting date and pilot duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement. The starting date is normally after signing the Grant Agreement. A retroactive starting date can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons, but never earlier than the date of the Lead Partner receiving the notification of awarding their respective application.

If the selected pilot fails to meet the requirements during financial and legal checks, or if negotiations reveal that a proposal cannot proceed to signing, the pilot with the next best score will be invited to undergo additional control and negotiation processes.

3.6 Share Your Feedback

In order to improve the CfP process, feedback from applicants will be collected. A feedback questionnaire will be sent to the lead applicants participating in each application round, together with the result letter consisting of evaluation results. The feedback asked from the applicants includes, but is not limited to the following information: *General Impression on the Call for Pilots, Clarity of Guidelines, Information Accessibility, Technical User-friendliness, Support and Communication, Timeline and Deadlines, Evaluation Process, Feedback Process, Suggestions for Improvements, Applicant Information.* Survey data is collected anonymously and will be solely used to analyse and improve the CfP process. Filling the form is voluntary and will not affect the evaluation results in any way.

For any inquiries or complaints related to the CfP, participants should contact the DS4SSCC-DEP project consortia through the email address support@ds4sscc.eu . Applicants are asked to explicitly outline any failures or errors encountered during the proposal assessment, providing clear references to relevant web pages or documents. Before filing a complaint, it is strongly advised that the applicant seeks additional information from the project consortia members through official communication channels within the designated time frame of 10 calendar days for submitting complaints.

Upon receiving the decision communication letter, the lead applicant can request an eligibility or evaluation review if there is an indication of incorrect eligibility checks, procedural shortcomings, or manifest errors in the evaluation process. The evaluation review focuses on procedural issues and, if applicable, factual errors, without challenging the judgement of the Evaluation Committee. The decision communication letter will specify a deadline for receiving such requests, set at 10 calendar days from the date of receiving the decision communication letter, considered received five calendar days after sending. Dedicated members from the Evaluation Team will send an acknowledgement of receipt no later than 10 calendar days after the request deadline, indicating the estimated date of a final response. The Evaluation Team will then scrutinise the complaint based on the applicant's submission. They will evaluate the case, determine the validity of the complaint, and communicate the decision to the applicant and the consortium.

Request criteria:

- Relates to the evaluation process or eligibility checks, providing clear grounds for the complaint.
- Submitted within the specified time limit in the information letter.
- Sent by the lead applicant.

Requests not meeting these conditions will not be admitted.

If the complaint is deemed justified, the Evaluation Team will instruct evaluators to re-evaluate the pilot application and the relevant assessment part, considering the complaint. The evaluators will then provide the Evaluation Team with an updated assessment. The final decision on the complaint will be communicated in writing to the applicant within 20 working days from the complaint submission date. This decision is final, binding to all parties, and not subject to further complaint proceedings within the program if based on the same grounds. Depending on the volume and content of the complaints, the overall process of awarding other grants can also be affected (e.g., the process could be delayed).

The Evaluation Team maintains an independent and fair assessment procedure to prevent potential conflicts of interest and ensure equitable treatment among applicants. For technical issues regarding the submission, please see the section Applicants Support.

4 Pilot Support during the Implementation Phase

Once the applications are selected as winning pilots, the Pilot Support team will take over the support role. This step bridges the selection process to the delivery and execution of the pilots. For example for 12-month pilots, there's a kick-off meeting in the first month (M1), a mid-term evaluation, and a final evaluation at the pilot's end (see Figure 4). The timing of the intermediary and final check is related to the pilot's total duration. There can also be additional review meetings if deemed necessary by the review board.

Figure 4 – Support Timeline over the Pilot Execution for a 12-month pilot

The support activities encompass the onboarding process, mentoring, and training program. Detailed information about these support activities is provided in the Pilots Onboarding and Support Plan.[59]

[59]Project Deliverable 4.1. Pilots Onboarding and Suppport Plan <https://www.ds4sscc.eu/s/D41-Pilots-onboarding-and-support-plan.pdf>

Onboarding

During the onboarding, detailed guidelines will be provided to the participants. It starts with an onboarding workshop for all winners in each CfP round to introduce pilots to the onboarding process, training, monitoring and evaluation plans.
This is followed by individual meetings scheduled with each pilot to discuss specific plans, collect necessary information (benchmarking) and address their needs.

Mentoring

A mentor assigned to each pilot during the contract phase is the main contact point for the pilots, supported by a pool of experts and trainers.
The mentor facilitates smooth onboarding, acts as the primary entry point into the data space, and monitors progress through the blueprint deployment stages.
Mentors connect pilots to resources, while experts and trainers provide support on technical, business, governance and legal matters.

Training Program

Each pilot team is required to designate participant(s) for active training (refer to Table 10 for a list of activities).
The training sessions aim to cater to the needs of both demand-side (local authorities) and supply-side (solution providers) participants.
Decision makers and IT experts from local authorities, along with business developers and IT experts from solution providers, will receive tailored training aligned with their respective roles, expertise, and knowledge levels.

Table 8 – Expected Effort Allocation in Pilots for Supporting Activities

Activity	Duration/frequency	Estimated effort (in days)
Joint onboarding workshop	2 hours	0.25
Bilateral interview for profiling/benchmarking	2 hours	0.25
Training at onboarding	2 hours	0.5
Additional trainings: local authorities	42 hours*	*The exact list of trainings will be prepared based on the onboarding interview.*
Additional trainings: solution providers	42 hours*	*The exact list of trainings will be prepared based on the onboarding interview.*
Request support from experts		1 day/month
Mid-term evaluation	2 hours	0.25
Final evaluation	2 hours	0.25
Checkpoints with the mentor	1 hour	1 hour/per week

**estimated contribution is 34 hours for IT experts and 8 hours for decision makers/business developers.*

In each pilot, a budget commitment is necessary for support processes, mentor communication, periodic evaluations and allocated training time (remote or physical) across different roles within the pilot.

5 Monitoring and Assessment

The monitoring and assessment of the pilots consist of benchmarking, mid-term and final evaluations. For benchmarking, each pilot is evaluated at the beginning of the execution, and baseline values are gathered to understand their starting points. This process also provides input to understand the training needs of the piloting team. For baseline requirements set for each pilot refer to the Technical Framework for additional details.

For benchmarking, mid-term and final evaluation of the pilots, key performance indicators (KPIs) are used (see Table 11).[60] An overview of these KPIs will be provided to the applicants during the CfP phase, offering insights into expectations and measurements throughout execution. These carefully selected KPIs aim to facilitate monitoring and assessment, emphasising data space principles. They are categorised under Governance, Impact, Management, Support, and Technical indicators, each with minimum target values for evaluation criteria.

Table 9 – Performance indicators for pilots evaluation

Category	Indicator	Target (minimal expected value)
Governance	number of data providers	2
Governance	number of data users	1
Governance	number of participants	3
Governance	number of contracts (new data provider)	1
Governance	participation in Stakeholder Forum meetings	all organised during the execution
Governance	number of engagement of EDIHs	1
Impact	number of events	1
Impact	number of diss actions (articles, posts, etc)	3
Impact	higher score in LORDIMAS	increment of 10% in the score
Management	ethics readiness	High
Management	% deviation of budget spent	<10%
Management	% ethical issues solved	100%
Support	number of support requests (Jira)	12
Support	number of training packages	4
Technical	number of datasets provided to other participants (shared)	2
Technical	number of reusable services	1
Technical	number of data sources	2
Technical	number of datasets reused from other participants (used)	2
Technical	number of AI services available	1

[60] These KPIs are developed as part of the DS4SSCC-DEP project Deliverable 4.1 Pilot Onboarding and Support Plan, available at https://www.ds4sscc.eu/s/D41-Pilots-onboarding-and-support-plan.pdf

Technical	number of datasets shared outside of the domain	1
Technical	number of implemented MIMs	2
Technical	number of newly developed applications	1
Technical	number of building blocks used	all essential
Technical	number of validated components from the blueprint (Federated Catalogue, Authorization Policies Store and Universal Registry)	3
Technical	number of open standards used	1 per used building block

The evaluation outcomes will inform analysis and assessment, and the performance of key performance indicators (KPIs) may also influence funding tranche payments. In addition to the already mentioned 26 indicators, additional indicators can be added based on pilot feedback. These target values represent the minimum goals for each pilot by the end of execution.

An overview of the progress in KPI measurements should be provided as part of the interim and final reports of the awarded pilots. The **interim report** must provide an overview of their progress along with their tasks, including datasets used, contribution to the Data Space, refinement of the blueprint, and local and general lessons. The **final report** must provide a comprehensive summary of the activities undertaken, any deviations from the plan and their justifications.

In addition to evaluating progress regarding KPIs, the pilots are required to also participate in an overall impact assessment of the piloting activities, based on the DS4SSCC-DEP project's Impact Framework. The pilots will fill in a self-assessment survey at the start of their projects, where they will need to specify concrete indicators for impact measurement.

Furthermore, the proposed framework guides pilot consortia to break down their intended impact into measurable outputs, outcomes and longer-term impact objectives. Outputs refer in this case to products, goods and services which result from implemented change activities including new policies, legislation, technological solutions, infrastructure etc, whereas outcomes signal a likely or achieved short-medium term effect of the proposed outputs.

The key difference between 'impact' and 'outcomes' is the reach and the scope, as longer term impact objectives capture the overall vision for the direct or indirect benefits created through implemented pilots.

The impact framework also proposes distinct categories for intended outcomes and outcomes, though these are highly dependent on the particular use case. CfP applicants are encouraged to specify their impact objectives as concretely as possible, making references also to intended outputs and outcomes.

Stay informed about the Call for Pilots

Stay up to date with the latest information on upcoming application rounds as well as engage with the DS4SSCC-DEP representatives through the following channels:

DS4SSCC-DEP website: www.ds4sscc.eu
The official website compiles all information related to the CfP, including documentation, FAQs and support details. These official channels are also used to provide infographics with the results from the CfP after its closing.

Newsletters and Press Releases: Website visitors have the option to sign up[61] for regular news updates and announcements via an official newsletter. Newsletter posts as well as Press Release publications can be found on the official website. www.ds4sscc.eu/repository

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/ds4sscc/
and **Twitter (X):** wwww.twitter.com/ds4sscc

Stakeholder Forum meetings: The Stakeholder Forum, set up in the preparatory action, holds over 200 individuals from the public sector, the industry, research and civil society. These 2-hour long online meetings serve to update potential applicants about the progress of the call, and provide them the opportunity to ask questions. These sessions will actively involve participants, offering opportunities to ask questions and receive bilateral feedback. To become a member of the Stakeholder Forum, fill in the Registration Form available at www.ds4sscc.eu/stakeholderforum.

Other webinars and recordings published on Youtube:
www.youtube.com/@ds4sscc

Revisit our previous events: www.ds4sscc.eu/events

[61] All interested stakeholders can sign up to the newsletter through the following link:
https://buzz.us12.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=7e161baef17a32eef4baa1706&id=264e0b4c0a